



Council tax information 2017/18

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 2017 to 31 March 2018.

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 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Between 2011-12 and 2014-15, Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority froze the level of council tax and in 2015-16 the level of council tax was decreased by one per cent. However, the funding settlement announced by the Government during 2015 means that the Authority now faces a reduction in its revenue support grant of 57% between 2015-16 and 2019-20. With this in mind, the Authority approved a 1.98% increase in council tax in 2016-17 and did so again for 2017-18.

We will spend £28.2 million (£36.09 per head of population) on providing services to you. Our services are funded by Government grants and business rates (£12.43 per head of population), council tax (£23.46 per head of population) and reserves (£0.20 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 2017-18.

Band	Amount
A	£40.59
B	£47.35
C	£54.12
D	£60.88
E	£74.41
F	£87.94
G	£101.47
H	£121.76

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 2017-18 was announced on 22 February 2017. The table below shows the breakdown of where our funding comes from:

Table: Where the money comes from	2016-17 £'000	2017-18 £'000
Revenue Support Grant and business rates	£9,458	£8,635
Specific grants	£1,099	£1,074
Council tax	£17,679	£18,327
Use of Reserves	£0	£150
Total	£28,236	£28,186

Where the money goes

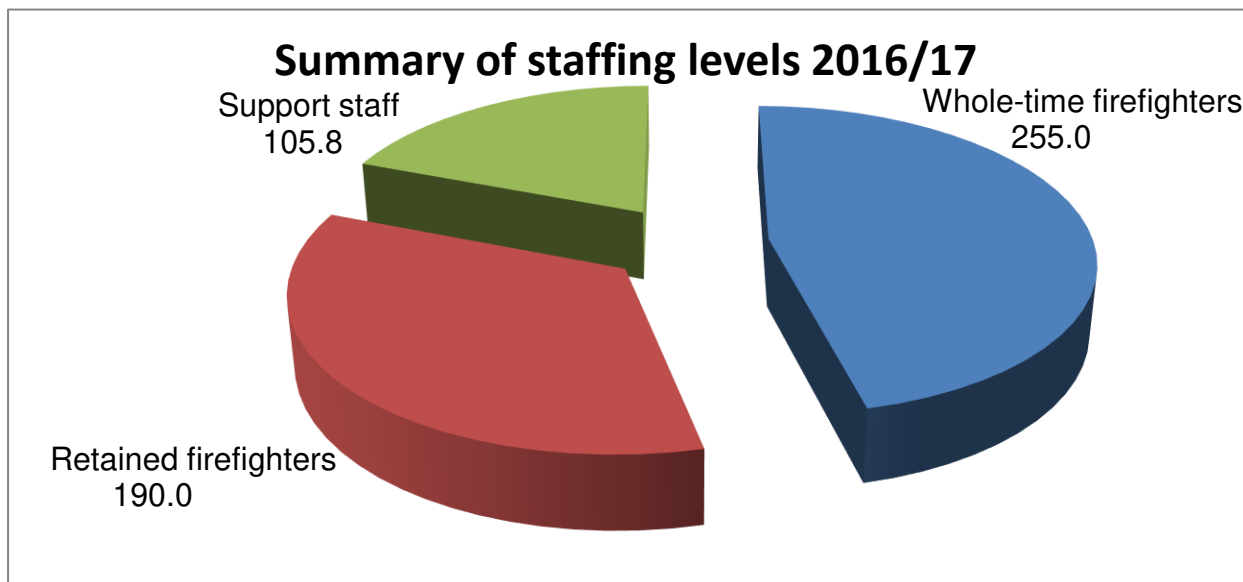
In this challenging financial environment, work continues to achieve a balanced budget, progressing in line with our Public Safety Plan for 2015-20 so that we can carry on as usual without detriment to public safety or emergency responses.

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 2017-18 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, new ways of working and are pursuing avenues which aim to share costs with our community partners and other fire authorities.

Table: Where the money goes	2016-17 £'000	2017-18 £'000
Employees	£20,160	£19,676
Premises	£1,733	£1,765
Transport	£803	£765
Supplies and services	£2,703	£2,762
Agency payments	£1,465	£1,774
Capital charges	£2,164	£2,324
Contributions to reserves	£22	£0
Income	-£814	-£880
Net budget requirement	£28,236	£28,186

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

The agency payments budget has been increased in 2017-18 in relation to the recruitment of additional apprentice posts across the Service and new safety initiatives within the community.



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

In 2016-17 BMKFRS welcomed 22 apprentice firefighters and 3 support service apprentices, following 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.

The FF apprentices will train for the same qualification that trainee firefighters have to attain and are employed via the Apprentice Training Agency (ATA). They offer BMKFRS an opportunity to refresh the workforce, while the organisation continues to plan and develop its operational resources for the future.

Retained 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.

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.

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.

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority has recently approved a proposal to merge Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations at a new "blue-light hub" site in West Ashland. This will generate revenue savings in excess of £6 million over the next ten years. Other capital projects include a five-year vehicles replacement programme, the replacement of specialist equipment and investment in new technology.

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.