



Council Tax Information 2009/10



How to contact Revenues and Benefits

By email: ben_rev@harrogate.gov.uk

Website:
www.harrogate.gov.uk/revenuesandbenefits

By telephone:
**Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates
01423 556677**

**Housing and Council Tax Benefit:
01423 556455**

Opening hours for telephone enquiries:
Monday to Thursday: 8.30am to 5.00pm
Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm

In person to:
**Scottsdale House, Springfield Avenue,
Harrogate HG1 2HR**

Opening hours for enquiries in person:
Monday to Friday: 8.30am to 4.30pm

Writing to:
**Revenues and Benefits Division,
PO Box 13, Scottsdale House,
Springfield Avenue, Harrogate HG1 2SD**

How can you help us?

Please inform us straight away if you move home or if there is any change in your circumstances that will affect the amount shown on the demand notice or if you are unhappy with our service. When contacting us please quote your account number or benefit claim reference.

Data Protection

The Revenues & Benefits Division of Harrogate Borough Council hold personal information on file about our customers in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may share some of this information with other divisions within Harrogate Borough Council to help improve our customer service to you. If you do not wish for this to happen please contact the above office.

Council Tax and What it Pays For

Harrogate Borough Council collects Council Tax on all domestic properties to help pay for the cost of local services. In the coming year Harrogate Borough Council will keep just 15% of your council tax to help provide the full range of its own services. The rest is paid over to the North Yorkshire County Council, North Yorkshire Police Authority, North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Authority and various Parish Councils. Each authority sets its own tax level and the Borough Council collects the total due for all the authorities.

The changes in the overall tax bill for 2009/10 for a Band D property are:	Band D Tax	Increase	%
North Yorkshire County	£1,027.30	£38.94	3.9
North Yorkshire Fire	£60.89	£2.33	4.0
North Yorkshire Police	£199.17	£5.80	3.0
Harrogate Borough	£219.56	£8.33	3.9
TOTAL	£1,506.92	£55.40	3.8

Since 1993 when Council Tax was introduced the Harrogate Borough Council element of the bill at Band D has risen from £139.92 to £219.56 for 2009/10. This is a sixteen year rise of 57% (or £80) compared with a 141% increase in the national average of council tax bills.

Harrogate Borough Council's Spending Plans

Harrogate Borough Council's spending this year has risen by 3.0% to cover the cost of inflation, rising costs and a variety of new government and local initiatives (e.g. Concessionary Travel and Recycling). The increase in its grant from central Government to meet these costs was just 1.7%. The grant per head still remains well below the average for a District Council. In order to keep the Council Tax increase to just 3.9%, the Council has increased its charges for services but also reviewed all its services to find ways of making savings through improving efficiency.

The average number of full-time equivalent staff Harrogate Borough Council expects to employ to provide local services is 1,277 for 2009/10, a decrease of 1 from 2008/09. Additional staff are being taken on mainly for the expansion of recycling schemes and in the externally funded North Yorkshire Sports section, but this is offset by a small reduction in the number of technical and events staff for Conferences and Exhibitions and the removal of vacant housing warden posts.

Your responsibilities

If you are receiving a discount you must advise the Revenues and Benefits Division if, for any reason, you think you no longer qualify for the discount or should be entitled to a lower amount. You are required to make this notification within 21 days of any change and if you fail to do so you can be liable to a penalty of £50.

Exempt Dwellings

Some properties may be exempt from Council Tax if they are unoccupied. Some occupied properties can also be exempt.

People with Disabilities

You may be entitled to a reduction if you, or someone who lives in your property, have a disability and your property has:

- A room that is not a bathroom, kitchen or toilet that is mainly used by the disabled person and is essential for their needs
- An extra bathroom and kitchen that is essential for their needs
- Extra space inside the property so that a wheelchair can be used.

Council Tax Appeals

You may appeal against various Council Tax matters e.g. because:

- You are not the resident or owner
- You think your property should be exempt
- You think you should get a discount you have not been allowed

If you wish to appeal you must notify the Council in writing so that your case can be considered. You must not withhold payment of Council Tax but if your appeal is successful you will receive a refund.

If you are not satisfied with the Council's determination of your case you may appeal to the Valuation Tribunal. Further information about the tribunal and its procedures can be obtained by visiting their website at: www.valuation-tribunals.gov.uk

Further information

More details about Benefits, Discounts, Exemptions and Reductions can be obtained by contacting the Revenues & Benefits Division as shown in this leaflet or by visiting our website at: www.harrogate.gov.uk/revenuesandbenefits where you will also be able to request an application form.

What Do These Services Include?

Cultural and Related Services (£43 per head)

- Parks and Gardens, Swimming Pools, Sports and Leisure Centres, Museums and Galleries and the net surplus on Conferences and Exhibitions.

Environmental Services (£48 per head)

- Refuse Collection, Recycling, Public Toilets, Food Safety, Street Cleansing, Control of Dogs, Pests and Noise, Cemeteries and Crematorium, CCTV and Community Safety.

Planning and Development Services (£21 per head)

- Forward Planning, Development Control, Building Control, Economic Development, and Regeneration Schemes.

Housing Services (£7 per head)

- Homelessness, Housing Advice, Housing Benefits and Housing Improvement Grants. Council Housing is in a separate account.

Highways, Roads and Transport (£9 per head)

- Footpath and Highway Maintenance, Concessionary Travel, surplus on Car Parking, Traffic Management and Road Safety. North Yorkshire County Council largely refunds the cost of Highway Maintenance to the Council.

Central Services (£30 per head)

- Council Tax Collection, Payment of Benefits, Land Charges, Electoral Registration, Elections, and Grants to Voluntary Organisations. Also included are capital financing charges and balance transfers.

Overall, the Council plans to spend £158 per resident on its services in 2009/10. Of this, £13 comes from Government Grant, £56 from redistributed business rates and **£89 from Council Tax, about £1.71 per week per resident.**

Financial Standing

Harrogate Borough Council had total external loans of £15.4m at 31 March 2008 compared with external investments of £28.7m and a total insurance value of its assets of £512m.

Parishes over £140,000:

Harrogate has no parishes with precepts over £140,000 in 2009/10.

BUDGET 2009/10

2008/09		2009/10		
Gross Cost £'000	Net Cost £'000	Gross Cost £'000	Net Cost £'000	
2,050	1,305	Council Tax Collection	1,923	1,153
11,509	1,352	Other Central Services to the Public	11,538	1,107
19,460	5,998	Cultural & Related Services	20,569	6,788
6,563	4,626	Refuse Collection	6,740	4,602
5,572	2,892	Other Environmental Services	5,846	3,008
6,564	2,943	Planning & Development	6,965	3,305
36,863	1,028	Housing Services	40,008	1,171
5,795	944	Highways, Roads & Transport	6,401	1,482
3,315	3,112	Corporate Costs & Overheads	3,444	3,228
97,691	24,200	COST OF SERVICES	103,434	25,844
1,896	CR 328	Financing costs and Balance transfers	169	CR 1,255
99,587	23,872	BOROUGH COUNCIL SPENDING	103,603	24,589
519	519	PARISH PRECEPTS	545	545
100,106	24,391	BOROUGH AND PARISH SPENDING	104,148	25,134
1,328		<i>Funded By:</i> Government Grant		2,073
9,537		Redistributed Business Rates		8,979
0		Collection Fund Deficit		DR 53
519		Council Taxpayers (Parish Element)		545
13,007		Council Taxpayers (Harrogate Borough Element)		13,590
24,391				25,134

How Your Council Tax Bill is Calculated

Your bill shows separately the amounts due for North Yorkshire County Council, North Yorkshire Police Authority, and North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Authority, which are explained in their separate leaflets.

The Harrogate Borough Council element of the Council Tax is calculated by dividing the total needed from local taxpayers (£13,590,000) by the equivalent number of Band D dwellings (61,896), to give a tax of £219.56 per Band D dwelling.

The amounts due from dwellings in each Band are statutory ratios of this Band D Tax (see below).

The additional amounts needed from Band D dwellings to reflect any Parish spending plans (£545,000) are shown in the separate table.

Non-Domestic Rates

Although Harrogate Borough Council collects the non-domestic rates, the rate in the pound is set by Central Government. This is 48.5p for 2009/10 (48.1p for small businesses). The Council expects to collect about £54.7m from ratepayers in 2009/10.

The sums are paid into a national pool. The proceeds are redistributed as part of the grant from central Government. There is no relationship between the amount of rates collected in the Harrogate area and the amount redistributed to this area, which in 2009/10 will be:

North Yorkshire County Council	£21.6m
North Yorkshire Police Authority	£5.5m
North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Authority	£2.2m
Harrogate Borough Council	£9.0m

Council Tax Valuation Bands

Your property is placed in one of eight valuation bands to enable the Council to calculate your Council Tax

Band	Value of Property at 1 April 1991	Proportion of Band D	Borough Council Tax
A	Not more than £40,000	6/9	£146.37
B	£40,001 to £52,000	7/9	£170.77
C	£52,001 to £68,000	8/9	£195.16
D	£68,001 to £88,000	9/9	£219.56
E	£88,001 to £120,000	11/9	£268.35
F	£120,001 to £160,000	13/9	£317.14
G	£160,001 to £320,000	15/9	£365.93
H	Over £320,000	18/9	£439.12

Becoming More Efficient

All Councils are required to measure and report the value of efficiency savings they have achieved since April 2008. An efficiency saving occurs when the cost of an activity falls, but its effectiveness is not reduced.

The table below shows the value of efficiency savings forecast to be achieved by the end of March 2009:

	Saving as a % £'000	of 2007/08 spending
North Yorkshire County	8,495	2.4
North Yorkshire Fire	145	0.5
Harrogate Borough	739	2.1

The table below shows the value of gains forecast to be achieved by March 2009 for the average Band D dwelling compared with the average figure for similar authorities across England:

	Saving per Band D dwelling £	National Average for similar authority £
North Yorkshire County	37	53
North Yorkshire Fire	0	2
Harrogate Borough	12	21

Each year, councils are assessed by the Audit Commission on their use of resources and given a score out of 4 (4 being "performing strongly" and 1 being "inadequate performance"). In January 2009, Harrogate Council scored 3 recognising that the Council is performing well on making efficiency savings. Please see our website www.harrogate.gov.uk/efficiency for more details.

Appeals against banding

If you think the valuation of your property is wrong you can only appeal for one of the following reasons:

- Within six months of buying the property or having the band changed by the Listing Officer
- Demolition, conversion of houses to flats, physical changes in the locality etc that may affect value.

For more information please contact the District Valuer, 2nd Floor, 2 Victoria Avenue, Harrogate HG1 1TN. Tel: 01423 830800 or visit the VOA website at www.voa.gov.uk

Use of Information

To levy and collect Council Tax requires details of your name and address to be held on a computer. This information may be passed to the District Valuer to assist with the valuation of properties or with appeals against banding. The information held by the Council in respect of Council Tax liabilities, may be used within the Council and by other Government organisations, for the purposes of preventing and detecting fraud.

When to Pay Your Council Tax

Council Tax is payable by a maximum of ten monthly instalments due on or before the 1st of each month as shown on your bill. Please note amounts owing from previous years are not included in the instalment plan and must be paid immediately unless an alternative arrangement has been agreed.

You may pay other than monthly by paying multiple instalments in advance e.g. five to pay half yearly.

If payments are received late a reminder will be sent and on the 3rd occasion, your right to pay by instalments will be withdrawn. The whole sum outstanding then becomes due. Failure to pay any reminder notice will result in the issue of a summons for the full outstanding balance and substantial costs.

Payment Difficulties

Should you have any difficulties regarding payment of your Council Tax, talk to us early. Contact the Revenues and Benefits Division as quickly as possible, who may be able to help you.

How to Pay Your Council Tax

Direct Debit

Telephone the Council on 01423 556677 with details of your bank account or complete the instruction on the front of your bill.