

COUNCIL TAX BILLING 2017-2018

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What does the Council Tax pay for ?

The Council Tax goes towards funding all of the services provided by Somerset County Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Avon & Somerset PCC, Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority, Somerset Rivers Authority and each local Town or Parish Council.

It is not a direct charge for any particular service you may or may not receive.

How much has the charge increased ?

A Band D charge has risen by £55.09 (3.71%) which equates to £1.06 per week. However there may also be an increase or decrease in the amount of your local Town or Parish Council charge.

Somerset County Council has increased it's overall Band D Precept by a total of £43.15 (3.99%) made up of:-

- A 1.99% increase in it's Band D precept of £21.52
- A 2% increase in it's Adult Social Care precept of £21.63

Sedgemoor District Council has increased it's Band D Precept by a flat rate of £5.00 (3.4%)

The Police and Crime Commissioner raised it's Band D Precept by £3.55 (1.99%)

Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority raised it's Band D Precept by £1.59 (1.99%)

Town or Parish Council Precepts have changed as they do each year.

The amounts for each Authority are shown separately near the top of each bill.

Why has Somerset County Council's Precept gone up ?

For information on Somerset County Council's precept and budget please see [Somerset County Council - Council Tax Leaflet 2017](#)

This can be found at www.somerset.gov.uk/information-and-statistics/financial-information/budgets-and-accounts

For more information on the budget:-

Visit: www.somerset.gov.uk/accounts

Tel: 0300 123 2224

Email: generalenquiries@somerset.gov.uk

Write to: Somerset County Council, County Hall, Taunton,
Somerset TA1 4DY

What is the Adult Social Care Precept ?

With a growing elderly population, the frontline Social Care Service do a great job but they are really stretched. That's why the Chancellor has given County Councils the opportunity to increase Council Tax by an additional 2% to invest directly into these services.

This started to be shown separately on bills from 2016/17, at £20.80 for a Band D property, which represents the amount being spent on ASC by SCC

Most Precepting Authorities will be increasing this element by the maximum they are allowed which is 2%. **But it is 2% of the full SCC Band D Precept and not 2% of just this year's ASC element of £20.80.**

This year's full precept for a Band D property is £1,081.64 so a 2% rise gives *£21.63 as this year's ASC increase. However the Government dictates what is shown on the bill and we are obliged to show the cumulative amount being spent on ASC. So SCC will spend £20.80 and £21.63 on ASC in 2017-18 and we are obliged to show ***£42.43 on the bill.

Therefore the 2% increase shown on the bill against ASC is based on the full precept amount for a Band D property and NOT 2% of this year's £20.80.

It is important to be aware that the 2% increase is based on a Band D charge and other bands will be calculated using the 6/9 for Band A, 7/9 for Band B, 8/9 for Band C, 9/9 for Band D, 11/9 for Band E, 13/9 for Band F, 15/9 for Band G and 18/9 for Band H so you will not be able to calculate 2% on this year's charges for anything other than a Band D property.

Additionally SCC are able to increase their Precept for non ASC expenditure and they have chosen to increase it by 1.99% which on the full precept of £1,081.64 for a Band D property gives **£21.52. The percentage increase against SCC precept is a true reflection as it is rounded to 2% however the amounts must be looked at overall as there is also the Rivers Authority charge to take into account:-

In total SCC have increased their precept by 3.99% (ASC 2% and Non ASC 1.99%)

For a Band D Property:-

Total 2016-17 SCC Precept	£1,081.64
ASC increase of 2%	*£21.63
Non ASC increase of 1.99%	**£21.52
Total 2017-18 SCC Precept	£1,124.79

However we are obliged to show this on the bills:-

SCC Precept	£1,069.52	2%
Adult Social Care	***£42.43	2%
SCC Rivers Authority	£12.84	

Total 2017-18 SCC Precept £1,124.79 (Not shown as a separate total on the bill)

No percentage increase is shown against SCC Rivers Authority as this is the first time it is shown as a separate line on the bills.

What is the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) ?

This was previously mentioned on the bills as being included in the 2016-17 full precept but is now being shown as separate lines on the bill.

The SRA's purpose is to provide an extra level of flood protection for families and communities across the whole of Somerset. The SRA will carry out important work including dredging and extra works to pumps, sluice gates, raised banks, culverts and other flood management assets.

Although there is a separate line for SDC Rivers Authority and SCC Rivers Authority it is one organization and fund which is used by the Rivers Authority throughout Somerset. Every District Council in Somerset and Somerset County Council itself contributes to the Rivers Authority.

For information on the Somerset Rivers Authority charge and budget please see [Somerset Rivers Authority information](#).

For more information:-

Email: sra@somerset.gov.uk
Visit www.somersetiversauthority.org.uk
Tel: 01823 358340

Why has Sedgemoor District Council's Precept gone up by £5.00 ?

Continued reductions in Government funding means Sedgemoor needed to raise it's Precept by a flat rate £5.00

SDC is committed to maintaining high quality services for it's residents and this increase is necessary to achieve that along with the financial savings Sedgemoor is making.

Why has the Fire & Rescue Authority Precept gone up ?

The following has been provided by the Fire & Rescue Authority :-

[Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service - Budget](#)

For more information visit www.dsfire.gov.uk

For more press information please contact:

Paul Slaven

PR Officer

01392 872259

pslaven@dsfire.gov.uk

Keep up to date and follow 'dsfireupdates' on Twitter and Facebook

Why has the Police Precept gone up ?

The following has been provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon & Somerset:-

[Avon & Somerset Police & Crime Commissioner - Budget](#)

Visit: www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk

Tel: 01275 816377

Email: pcc@avonandsomerset.pnn.police.uk

Write: Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner,
Police Headquarters, Valley Road, Portishead, BS20
8JJ

Why has the Town or Parish Council Precept gone up/down ?

The restraints imposed by the Government on the main precepting authorities do not apply to Town or Parish Council precepts so they are able to increase or reduce the amount of their precept to cover their spending requirements for 2017/18. Should you require any detailed information on the make up of the Parish precept you should contact your local Town or Parish Council direct.

I am not happy at the level of the charge or the services received from those Precepting Authorities, what can I do ?

You should contact the relevant Precepting Authority direct. You are not legally entitled to withhold any part of the Tax and recovery

action may be taken if you don't make the payments you are required to make on time.

How can I pay?

The most efficient and economic way to pay is by Direct Debit - If you would like to make payments by Direct Debit please contact Sedgemoor District Council on 0300 303 7801 with your bank details. With Direct Debit there is a choice of payment days: 1st, 10th or 21st of each month.

Other payment methods include: -

By standing order with your bank. If you wish to set up a standing order, please contact us on 0300 303 7801 and we will be happy to provide the details you need.

Council's current bank details:-

Bank: Nat West, 9 York Buildings, Cornhill, Bridgwater TA6 3BS
Payee: Sedgemoor District Council, Bridgwater House, King Square, Bridgwater TA6 3AR

Account Name:	Sedgemoor District Council
Account Number:	79141684
Sort Code:	60-03-27

Please ensure the full reference number is quoted omitting the forward slashes.

Via the Internet. Payments can be made online www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/payments

By debit or credit card. If you wish to pay by debit or credit card please call 0300 303 7801. Types of card accepted include Switch, Solo and Delta. Please note there is a handling fee of 0.85% for payment by credit card.

At the Post Office or Paypoint Outlet. Payment can be made at any Post Office free of charge using the bar code on your bill. The plastic payment cards are no longer valid and cannot be used. If you need a new bar code please call 0300 303 7801

I have arrears shown on my bill for previous years what does this mean?

It means you have an amount(s) outstanding on your Council Tax charges prior to 01/04/17.

Although the bills are dated the 10th March 2017 the amount(s) shown were outstanding when the bills were selected for production on 1st March 2017. Any payments made since this date will reduce the balance accordingly.

The arrears shown are not included in the instalments and are to be paid separately. They may already be subject to some enforcement action. If you are not able to pay your arrears please contact the Revenues Service on 0300 303 7801

I pay by direct debit every year but do I need to complete a new mandate?

Please look on your bill and see if it shows your payments will be collected by direct debit. If it does this facility will continue year after year and you will not need to complete a new mandate.

If there is a barcode on your bill there is no Direct Debit in place. If you would like to pay by Direct Debit please ring 0300 303 7801 with your bank details.

I haven't got a payment card or booklet! How can I pay at the post office or paypoint outlet ?

There is a bar code printed at the foot of the bill, which will be scanned at the post office and a receipt given. The plastic payment cards are no longer valid and cannot be used

There is no charge for you to pay by this method although direct debit is a cheaper and more efficient method for you and the Council. If you would like to pay by direct debit please telephone 0300 303 7801 with your bank details.

What instalments do I have to pay?

Instalments are normally payable on the 1st of each month unless you pay by Direct Debit where the payment date may be either the 1st, 10th or 21st of the month.

The default instalment plan is 10 payments from April to January and the amounts to pay are shown at the foot of the bill in two columns.

The charge is normally payable over 10 months of the year, but you will be able to pay over 12 months. If you think you will have difficulty making the payments shown on the bill you should contact the Customer Services Team on a direct line of 0300 303 7801

Can I pay over twelve months ?

Yes, you can, the default payment method is 10 monthly instalments from April to January each year but instalments may be spread to March on request. If you would like your instalments to run to March each year please ring 0300 303 7801

Can I pay weekly or fortnightly ?

The instalments are due on the first of each month in full. If your finances are organised on a weekly or fortnightly basis you should contact the Council's Revenue Service on 0300 303 7801.

Can I pay the charge in full now?

Yes, the total amount payable for the year is shown on the bill and may even be paid by direct debit in a single payment if you wish.

If you would like to pay by direct debit please telephone 0300 303 7801 with your bank details.

Is there any discount for early payment?

No, the early payment discount scheme ended in 2001/2002 due to a decrease in interest rates so there is no reduction for early payment.

What help can I get if I have difficulty making my payments ?

Please contact Sedgemoor District Council's Revenue service as soon as possible, we will be happy to discuss payment terms and give you any other assistance available. Please ring 0300 303 7801 to speak to a member of the team direct.

What unoccupied charges currently apply ?

The Government, through the Local Government Finance Act 2012 replaced certain Council Tax exemptions with locally determined discounts. On 12th December 2012 the Council's Executive agreed the following policy:-

Exemption / Discount	Policy to 31 st March 2013	Policy from 1 st April 2013
Class A – vacant property which requires, is undergoing, or has recently undergone major repair work to make it habitable or structural alteration	100% exemption for up to 12 months whilst the qualifying conditions exist	100% discount for up to 12 months whilst the qualifying conditions exist
Class C – unoccupied and unfurnished dwellings	100% exemption for up to 6 months whilst the qualifying conditions exist	100% discount for up to 3 months whilst the qualifying conditions exist. 100% Council Tax charge after 3 months.
2nd Homes – furnished property but in which no person has their sole or main residence	10% minimum statutory discount so a 90% Council Tax charge applies	0% discount so a Council Tax charge of 100% will apply
Long Term Empties – property which is unoccupied and unfurnished and empty for 6 months or more	10% discretionary discount so a 90% Council Tax charge applies	0% discount so a Council Tax charge of 100% will apply
Empty Homes Premium	A long term empty charge of 90% lasts indefinitely until a property is brought back into use.	A Long Term Empty Premium charge of 50% will be applied to properties that have been empty for 24 months or more. This

		equates to 150% of the Council Tax charge.
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These changes were developed in consultation with the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership which consists of Sedgemoor District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset District Council.

The charging policy supports the aims of the partnership in bringing empty property back into use as soon as possible and provides consistency in charges across the three authorities.

There is a growing need for housing and accommodation in the area which will continue to increase as the development of Hinkley Point C progresses. These charges will encourage owners to bring long term empty properties back into use to help meet increasing demand.

Although not the main purpose of these changes they will also increase Council Tax revenue across all three authorities.

How to have your Council Tax liability reduced if you are on a low income

Council Tax Support

The Government ended the Council Tax Benefit Scheme and instructed all Councils to replace it with their own Council Tax Support scheme. However, pensioners must be protected from any changes and in the main, the regulations behind the previous scheme still apply to them.

The current **Council Tax Support Scheme** is effective from 1st April 2017.

Who can apply?

Council Tax Support is help for anyone on a low income who has a liability to pay Council Tax. You can claim if you are in full time or part-time work, or get Social Security Benefits, Tax Credits or Pension Credits. Each local council works out Council Tax Support applications in line with the rules of their local scheme for working age people, or in line with the Prescribed Regulations for pension age residents.

If you have to pay Council Tax and you are on a low income, you could get a Council Tax Support under our local scheme.

You cannot get Council Tax Support if you:

- Have more than £16,000 in capital or savings (unless you are a pensioner getting Guarantee Credit)
- Are a full-time student unless you are either under 21 and not in higher education and you started your course before you became 19; or you are a pensioner, lone parent, disabled, getting Income Support or Income Based Jobseekers' Allowance, or Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related), or you have a partner who is not a student.

If you have come to the United Kingdom in the last 2 years, or if you are an asylum seeker, it may affect your claim.

How do I apply?

- By completing a paper application form available from all of our offices
- By downloading and printing the application form to complete
- Paper application forms can be returned to one of our Area Offices or posted to the address on the front of the form. (If you have not had a receipt for your Application Form within 7 days, please call us on 0300 303 7802 / 01278 436470 to ensure we have received it.)

Second Adult Rebate

If you are over state pension credit age and do not qualify for benefit in your own right, you could get a Second Adult Rebate. If the person who shares your home is:

- Aged 18 or over
- Not a boarder or sub-tenant
- Not your spouse or partner
- On a low income
- Not paying Council Tax themselves

You may be able to get a rebate of up to 25% of what you have to pay.

Our Scheme for 2017-18

Council Tax Support for working age households will be broadly based on the principles and rules used under the previous national means tested scheme for Council Tax Benefit. There are however some key areas where the scheme will differ:

- A limit to maximum support amounting to 85% of actual council tax liability for customers living in Bands A, B, C, or D dwellings - i.e. Customers in these bands will need to pay a minimum of 15% of their council tax charge.
- For those living in properties in Bands E, F, G or H, maximum support will be limited to 85% of an equivalent Band D dwelling.
- Child maintenance income previously disregarded in full will now be disregarded at a rate of £66.90 per week per child, so income less than this level is not taken into account.
- A minimum entitlement level of £1 per week. This means those people currently entitled to support between £0.01p and £0.99p a week will not receive support.

Changes in your circumstances

If you get Council Tax Support and your circumstances change, you must tell us immediately. You could phone us first and our Benefits Officers will be able to tell you what information we need to reassess your claim, write to us at the address on the front of your council tax bill or email us on:

benefits@sedgemoor.gov.uk

No ifs....No Buts....

Everyone who commits benefit fraud is a benefit thief. If you think someone is committing fraud by claiming a reduction to which they are not entitled, it is important you let us know about it. Call us on **0300 303 7802** or phone the National Fraud Hotline on **0800 854 440**. You do not have to give your name but tell us as much information as you can about the person and why you think they are committing benefit fraud.

Fraud is a crime against everyone in the community and we will consider prosecuting all cases where we have enough evidence.

Please note the new Council Tax Support Scheme only applies to working age applicants. Customers who have reached the state pension credit age are protected from any changes in our scheme.

I've been sent a bill but my circumstances have changed?

Change of address	-	Tel: 0300 303 7801
Single occupier	-	Tel: 0300 303 7801
I should be getting benefit	-	Tel: 0300 303 7802

I am in receipt of Benefit but there is no Council Tax Support shown on my bill?

Please contact the Council's Benefit helpline on 0300 303 7802 for advice.

I don't agree with the Banding of my property – what can I do?

The banding of property is dealt with by the Valuation Office who may be contacted by Tel: 03000 501 501 Email: ctwest@voa.gsi.gov.uk or website information at www.voa.gov.uk

You are legally obliged to make payments on the existing Band whilst any appeal is underway. Recovery action may be taken if you do not make the payments you are required to.