

Your Services

Meeting your priorities while keeping council tax as low as possible.



THE GREEN FAMILY - DAY OUT IN COLCHESTER

Your Council



Introduction



This year, we have set a council tax rise of 4.6%, the second lowest rise since the tax was introduced, despite an increase of only 2% in government grant and rising demand for our services. At the same time we're continuing to improve services to the people of Essex.

Thank you for taking the time to read this year's council tax leaflet, which sets out the background to how your tax has been calculated and tells you a little about the services that we provide.

As a result of our commitment to continuous improvement we've recently received national recognition from the government watchdog, the Audit Commission, as one of the best councils in the country. We've also been praised for our care for older people, have been nationally recognised as providing best practice in the delivery of our Integrated Children's Services and have been identified as providing one of the best library services in the UK.

We've listened to residents who said they would prefer a level of council tax that avoids cuts and allows improvements to services. We've balanced this with keeping the council tax low by careful management of resources and reinvestment of £23 million of efficiencies to frontline services.

These savings have allowed us to cope with some difficult inflationary pressures and increasing demand in many of our services, particularly the disposal of waste and caring for older people. Despite these pressures, we will continue to do all we can to improve the efficiency and quality of services for the people of Essex.

Your Council Tax

Your council tax charge from Essex County Council is used to support a wide range of services across Essex.

The council tax you pay is dependent on the banding of your house, which is based upon the value of the property as at April 1991.

The County Council's charge for each band is set out in the table below:

Band	County Council Tax
A	£640.26
B	£746.97
C	£853.68
D	£960.39

Band	County Council Tax
E	£1,173.81
F	£1,387.23
G	£1,600.65
H	£1,920.78

In addition, there will be separate charges from your district/borough council, Essex Police Authority, Essex Fire Authority and possibly your town/parish council (if you have one). Please see your bill for your final council tax figure.

Help with paying your council tax

There are ways to get help paying your council tax. If you are on a low income you may be entitled to Council Tax Benefit. If you live on your own or are disabled you may qualify for a discount or reduction. For further information, please contact your local district or borough council (contact details are on the back cover of this leaflet) or for independent advice, ask your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

Your Services Your Priorities

What your money buys

We want to continually develop our services so we've committed to achieving a number of key improvements by 2009. For more information on our services, how your council tax is spent and the pledges we've made, visit our website www.essexcc.gov.uk/counciltax and receive updates on our progress in Essex Matters.

Here are just a few examples of the range of services your council tax helps us to provide.



Older People and Independent Living

Delivers over 77,000 Meals on Wheels a month

Helps more than 21,000 older people to live in their own homes

Supports 5,026 older people in residential and nursing care

Supports over 1,215 adults with disabilities in residential and nursing care.



Supporting Essex Children and Families

Supports the 200,000 children being educated in 577 Essex Schools

Manages over 220 youth projects in centres around the county

Looks after approximately 1,280 children through fostering, adoption and residential care placements.



Protecting the Essex Environment

Disposes of the **491,000** tonnes of waste collected by the district and borough councils in Essex
Recycles almost **58%** of household waste at our **23** Civic Amenity and Recycling Centres
Supports **60,000** Essex businesses through Trading Standards to comply with safe and fair trading laws
Advises on **30,000** complaints and enquiries received by Consumer Direct relating to goods and services provided by traders in Essex.



Supporting our Communities

Lends over **11 million** books, CDs, DVDs and videos in audio format, large print and many languages through **73** libraries and **16** mobile libraries in Essex
Educates approximately **44,000** adult learners in **9** adult community colleges and **250** other venues
Maintains a record of all listed buildings and archaeological sites, and provides specialist advice
Organises events and activities including the Essex Book Festival and Essex on Tour.



Getting Essex Moving

Maintains **4,617** miles of road and approximately **3,800** miles of public rights of way
Provides **250** school crossing patrols
Maintains **120,725** streetlights
Supports **12** community transport schemes.

Council spending

	Gross expenditure £m
2005/06	1,705
Inflation	51
Additional expenditure on services	84
Efficiencies	(23)
2006/07	1,817

2005/06 £m	Budget	2006/07 £m
1,705	Gross spending on services	1,817
-	Less Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)	(698)
(244)	Other specific grants	(239)
(117)	Other income	(120)
(30)	Interest payments, asset charges, etc	(64)
1,314	Leaving us with a budget requirement of:	696
	This is financed by:	
843	General government grant	202
471	Council tax	494
1,314	Budget requirement	696

2006/07 sees a change in the way the County Council's services are funded. Schools are now being financed through a new government grant, the Dedicated Schools Grant. Funding for this grant has been deducted from the general government grant funding which is now

only used to fund spending on all other council services. This change has not impacted on the overall level of services provided by the County Council, they are just being financed in a different way.

Allowing for the changes in schools funding, the general government grant for funding non-schools services has only been increased by 2%. However, by making efficiency savings, we have been able to invest money to deliver improvements in our frontline services. This is shown in the increasing number of older people and people with disabilities we support to lead independent lives, improving services to children, and tackling congestion and highway improvements on Essex roads.

Supporting other agencies

The table below sets out the contributions that the County Council makes to support other agencies that provide services to Essex residents. Visit our website or contact us directly for further information. Please see the back of this leaflet for details.

Levying Body	Environment Agency £000	Lee Valley Regional Park £000	Kent and Essex Sea Fisheries £000
Gross expenditure 2005/06	147,698	11,900	498
Gross expenditure 2006/07	159,064	12,400	533
ECC contribution 2005/06	1,043	1,481	193
ECC contribution 2006/07	871	1,522	201

For more detailed information on paying your council tax and to clarify if you are entitled to a discount or help with paying your bill please contact your local borough or district council:

Basildon: 01268 294544

Braintree: 01376 557755

Brentwood: 01277 312831

Castle Point: 01268 882202

Chelmsford: 01245 606780

Colchester: 01206 282300

Epping Forest: 01992 564188

Harlow: 01279 446688

Maldon: 01621 875877

Rochford: 01702 546366

Tendring: 01255 686822

Uttlesford: 01799 510335

Essex Police: 01245 452395

Essex Fire: 01277 222531

For more information on the services provided by Essex County Council please visit our website at: www.essexcc.gov.uk/counciltax or contact us:

By telephone: 08457 430 430

By post: Essex County Council, Freepost CL3636, Chelmsford CM1 1LX



Alternative line for people with hearing impairments:
(minicom) 08457 585 592

The information contained in this leaflet is available in alternative formats: large print, braille, audio tape or disk. We can also translate into other languages.



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