

# Your Guide to Council Tax 2005/6

Please keep this booklet



Council tax is a tax on property that helps pay for the cost of providing local services.

This booklet gives you information about how we calculate the council tax and how we spend money.

[www.merton.gov.uk](http://www.merton.gov.uk)



If you would like more information in your own language,  
please contact us at the address shown in the bottom box.

Albanian

Nese deshironi me shume informacion ne gjuhen tuaj, ju lutemi te na kontaktoni ne adresen e dhene ne kutine me poshte.

Arabic

إذا أردت معلومات إضافية بلغتك الأصلية الرجاء الاتصال بنا  
في العنوان المدون ضمن الإطار أدناه.

Bengali

যদি আপনার নিজের ভাষায় লেখা আরও তথ্য চান তাহলে দয়া করে  
আমাদের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করুন, তলার বক্‌সে আমাদের ঠিকানা রয়েছে।

Chinese

如果你需要用中文印成的資料，  
請按低端方格內提供的地址與我們聯繫。

French

Pour tout renseignement complémentaire dans votre propre langue, veuillez  
nous contacter à l'adresse figurant dans l'encadré du bas.

Gujarati

જો તમને તમારી પોતાની ભાષામાં વધારે માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો કૃપા કરીને  
નીચે અંતમાં આપેલા ખાનામાં દર્શાવેલા સરનામે અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

Punjabi

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਹੋਰ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ  
ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਖਾਨੇ ਵਿਚ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਠਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Serb-Croat

Ako želite više informacija na svom jeziku, obratite nam se na  
adresu koja se nalazi u kvadratu na dnu strane.

Somali

Hadii aad u baahan tahay faahfaahin intaa kabadan oo ku soobsan afkaaka  
hooyo ama Af Somali fadlan lana soo xiira cinwaanka hoos ku qoran.

Spanish

Si usted desea mas informacion en su propia lengua, por  
favor contactenos en la direccion al pie del formato.

Tamil

உங்கள் மொழியில் மேலதிக தகவலைப் பெற விரும்பினால், அடியிலுள்ள  
பெட்டிக்குள் தரப்பட்டுள்ள விவரத்தில் எம்முடன் தொடர்பு கொள்ளுங்கள்.

Urdu

اگر آپ اپنی زبان میں مزید معلومات حاصل کرنا چاہتے ہیں تو براہ کرم  
ہم سے اس پتے پر رابطہ قائم کریں جو کہ نیچے کے بکس میں درج ہے۔

Information is also  
available in large print,  
Braille and tape.

The Director of Corporate Services  
Merton Civic Centre, London Road,  
Morden SM4 5DX

Dear Resident,

**Merton aims to strike the right balance with a low council tax increase this year and next.**

Achieving quality services and long-term financial stability are the priorities for us this year. We have the benefit of solid financial support from the Government in this year's financial settlement. By increasing our funding by 7.0% they gave us one of the highest rises in London. Together with £12m of savings we have made in Merton's own budgets, this has allowed us to increase the Merton element of the council tax by only 2.5%. Together with a 5.5% rise in the GLA precept, the council tax has only gone up by 3.1%. This is one of the lowest rises in London. We can also promise a similarly low increase next year.

We know that the level of the council tax was the issue that concerned you the most last year, despite the fact that we have carried out our election promise to keep the council tax in line with other outer London boroughs. To respond to that level of concern, we spent last year developing proposals of how we could save £12m. By making these savings we can invest in the areas that concern you most and keep council tax rises low.

**Because we know the environment remains a clear priority for you, we are spending an extra £900,000 on recycling, removing graffiti, providing more neighbourhood wardens, and removing abandoned vehicles and fly-tips.**

Providing a first-class education and caring for the vulnerable are major priorities for us. We continue to work with schools to raise standards to the level of the very best. This year we can give an extra £7m to Merton's schools. This adds to our recent investment of more than £15m in primary schools and more than £54m in our six secondary schools. Our care services have also received £7.5m more in grants than last year.

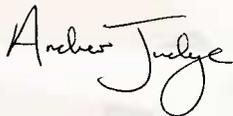
Others have now recognised improvements in Merton's services:

- The Audit Commission has described Merton as a 'fair' council (an improvement on our previous 'weak' rating).
- OFSTED has said that our Local Education Authority is highly satisfactory and has made highly satisfactory progress since the last inspection to become an upper two-star authority.
- The Commission for Social Care Inspection has recorded Merton's achievement in moving from special measures to two stars in just three years. Merton is in a group of only 18% of local councils that have shown improved performance at this level.
- Merton's environmental performance rating has leapt from a one to a three (out of four).

You can find out more about our spending plans on pages four and five of this booklet. To find out more about any council service, you can visit [www.merton.gov.uk](http://www.merton.gov.uk) or phone our contact centre on 020 8274 4901.

We are determined to provide value for money and have taken further steps to improve services. I aim to continue improvements next year.

Yours faithfully



**Andrew Judge, Leader of the Council**



Contents	Page
Merton's spending on services	4-5
Greater London Authority	6-7
Managing flood risk in your area	8
Lee Valley Regional Park Authority	9
Council Tax reductions	10-12
Ten most frequently asked questions	13
Merton Council Tax Benefit form	14
Merton Reuse and Recycling Centre	15
Council telephone numbers	back page

# Merton's spending on services



## The Council Tax

Council Tax is made up of three parts.

The following shows the figures for Band D:

	2004/05	2005/06	Increase
	£	£	%
Spending on Merton's local services	958.03	981.85	2.5%
Spending on Levies	7.13	7.44	4.3%
Subtotal	965.16	989.29	2.5%
GLA precept	241.33	254.62	5.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,206.49</b>	<b>1,243.91</b>	<b>3.1%</b>

## How Merton pays for services:

Three main sources make up the money we plan to spend on services in 2005/2006.

These are:

	£000's	%	£/head
Non-Domestic Rates	63,782	30	331.73
Revenue Support Grant	76,304	36	396.85
Council Tax Income	71,150	34	370.05
<b>Total Budget Requirement</b>	<b>211,236</b>	<b>100</b>	

Local councils collect Non-domestic Rates from businesses and pay them into a national pool. The Government then shares the pool, along with the Revenue Support Grant, (the money Government gives to all local councils) on the basis of what they think we need to spend. In 2005/06 they think Merton will spend £211.783m. We then use money we collect from residents (the council tax) to make up the rest of our budget.

## Spending on services provided by Merton

Merton uses the money we get from Government, businesses and the council tax to pay for the services we provide (apart from housing which is mainly paid for by rents and government subsidies). The amounts we plan to spend on these services in 2005/2006 (together with comparative information for 2004/2005) is shown below.

2004/05			2005/06		
Gross Expenditure	Income	Net Expenditure	Gross Expenditure	Income	Net Expenditure
£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
7,976	5,087	2,889	2,148	1,370	778
21,054	16,636	4,418	21,264	16,802	4,462
17,809	14,072	3,737	32,620	25,775	6,845
124,846	22,234	102,612	134,752	23,998	110,754
55,007	26,930	28,077	52,815	25,857	26,958
14,535	5,549	8,986	13,697	5,229	8,468
83,833	30,197	53,636	78,786	28,379	50,407
1,558	743	815	1,864	805	1,059
721	-	721	763	-	763
21,203	28,333	(7,130)	18,144	19,302	(1,158)
<b>348,542</b>	<b>149,781</b>	<b>198,761</b>	<b>356,853</b>	<b>147,517</b>	<b>209,336</b>
		<b>1,000</b>			<b>1,900</b>
		<b>199,761</b>			<b>211,236</b>
			<b>Planned Expenditure</b>		
			<b>Contribution to Reserves</b>		
			<b>Net requirement for tax purposes</b>		

Please note that the detailed budgets for 2005/06 are not yet finalised and may change, although the overall total will not alter.

# Merton's spending on services



## The change in revenue spending from 2004/05 to 2005/06

	£m
Revenue Spending 2004/05	199.8
Savings in Service Provision	(17.2)
Pay and Price increases and approved growth	15.6
Other Corporate additions, Superannuation Revaluation, capital budgets effects, funding changes	11.1
<b>Revenue Spending 2005/06</b>	<b>209.3</b>
Contribution to General Fund Reserves	1.9
Net Requirement for Tax Purposes	211.2

## The charge and bands

The council tax uses the Band D charge as its basis. We work out all other bands from the Band D charge as follows:

Band	Property value	Proportion of Band D Charge	Council Tax £
A	up to £40,000	6/9	829.28
B	£40,001-£52,000	7/9	967.49
C	£52,001-£68,000	8/9	1,105.70
D	£68,001-£88,000	9/9	1,243.91
E	£88,001-£120,000	11/9	1,520.33
F	£120,001-£160,000	13/9	1,796.75
G	£160,001-£320,000	15/9	2,073.19
H	£320,001 upwards	18/9	2,487.82

If you live within the area of Wimbledon and Putney Common you pay an extra £21.89 (Band D) to cover the expenses of the Commons Conservators. Including this charge, the Band D charge is £1,265.80.

## Levies

Included within the spending plans are levies that we have to pay to certain bodies which are outside the control of the council. These are as follows:

	2004/05 £	2005/06 £
Lee Valley Regional Park	199,031	208,632
Environment Agency: Flood Defence	123,410	132,521
London Pensions Fund Authority	188,178	192,372
Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators	210,968	229,095
<b>Total Levies</b>	<b>721,587</b>	<b>762,620</b>

## Borrowing

At the end of 2004/2005 we had outstanding debt of £169m.

We pay for the interest arising from this debt using the council tax, or from rents in the case of housing.

## People employed

The estimated number of staff we employ (calculated on full-time basis) for 2005/2006 is 4,096. This compares with a total of 4,160 in 2004/2005.

## Mayor of London

The priorities for the Mayor's fifth budget are to extend the safer neighbourhood policing programme, deliver further transport improvements and provide a package of measures to improve Londoners' environment and quality of life. This will cost Londoners living in a band D household an extra 26p a week. Most of the increase is for policing, with a modest increase for the fire service and the GLA, partly offset by a reduction in the amount for transport. The 2 per cent of households in the top band H will have to pay an extra 51p a week.

This increase leads to a GLA precept of £254.62 for the year for a Band D household. Of this about £196 (three quarters) is for policing, £44 for the fire service, £7 for transport, and £8 for the GLA itself.

There is a 5.6 per cent increase in the budget requirement and a 5.5 per cent increase in the council tax precept.

GLA Group	£m Budget	£m Budget
	2004/5	2005/6
<b>Gross expenditure</b>	<b>8,796.5</b>	<b>9,083.1</b>
Specific grants	-2,777.3	-2,782.4
Other income	-2,827.7	-3,234.8
<b>Net expenditure</b>	<b>3,191.5</b>	<b>3,065.9</b>
Reserves	-377.7	-93.3
<b>Budget requirement</b>	<b>2,813.8</b>	<b>2,972.6</b>
Grants	-2,126.8	-2,242.4
Collection fund	-3.3	-2.8
<b>Council tax income</b>	<b>683.7</b>	<b>727.4</b>

## Metropolitan Police Authority

This year's budget provides a further 160 safer neighbourhood teams, five for each London borough. These teams will be dedicated to serve the local community and are not available for redeployment to other duties.

These additional officers will mean that the Metropolitan Police Service will have about 33,750 police and police community support officers by 31 March 2006. This is the highest number ever and has allowed the police to get back where the public wants them - on the beat in local streets and neighbourhoods.

the statistics show that this investment is working and across the capital crime is down and continuing to fall. Detection rates are also rising and more criminals are being caught. During the last year these results have been even better in the safer neighbourhood areas.

## London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority

The Fire Authority budget reflects the continuing modernisation of the brigade, and includes proposals to move 10 fire engines from the central London area to other surrounding areas. This would deliver improvements in the overall performance of the fire service. The Fire Authority also proposes to concentrate more resources on preventing fires and other emergencies.

## Transport for London

With a ground-breaking five year funding settlement agreed with the Government, the TfL budget provides for a substantial investment in London's transport infrastructure, which will tackle congestion and make the network safer, more reliable, comfortable, environmentally friendly and accessible to all.

TfL service analysis	Budget £m	Budget £m
	2004-05	2005-06
London Underground	1,255.1	1,327.5
London buses	666.9	661.9
Surface transport	532.3	588.9
Rail services	88.8	141.8
Other	108.7	80.0
<b>Net services expenditure</b>	<b>2,651.8</b>	<b>2,800.1</b>

This increasing investment is being funded by government grant, fares and borrowing. There is a £6m reduction in the amount to be raised from council taxpayers.

## London Development Agency

The activities of the LDA are funded entirely from specific grants and capital receipts, and so no income is raised in local tax from the precept.

## Greater London Authority

With the exception of Trafalgar Square, the GLA has few direct service responsibilities. The budget relates to all the GLA activities which support the

delivery of the Mayor's vision and policy objectives, and the Assembly's scrutiny functions.

## Finding out more

More information is available on the budget and GLA activities and as a whole on the GLA website at [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk) (telephone 020 7983 4000).

The tables below show the gross expenditure for the GLA group and, with the application to this of grants, other income and reserves, the budget requirement (Table 1); reasons for the change in the budget requirement (Table 2); and the increase in council tax precept for a Band D household (Table 3).

	MPA £m		LFEPA £m		TfL £m		LDA £m		GLA £m	
Table 1	2004-05	2005-06	2004-05	2005-06	2004-05	2005-06	2004-05	2005-06	2004-05	2005-06
Gross expenditure	2,884.8	3,113.9	438.7	449.4	4,442.2	5,059.3	344.6	392.0	73.1	68.8
Specific grants	-200.6	-222.8	-13.7	-6.6	-2,229.8	-2,161.0	-344.6	-392.0	-	-
Other income	-317.2	-380.8	-31.7	-34.2	-2,605.1	-2,806.9	-	-	-10.1	-12.8
Net expenditure	2,367.0	2,510.3	393.3	408.6	-392.7	91.4	Nil	Nil	63.0	56.0
Contributions to/ from reserves	-23.7	-22.0	-4.9	-5.2	418.5 <sup>1</sup>	-71.4	-	-	-6.7 <sup>1</sup>	4.9
Budget Requirement	2,343.3	2,488.3	388.4	403.4	25.8	20.0	Nil	Nil	56.3	60.9

Note 1: This TfL figure is exceptional and is mainly due to the establishment of reserves for London Underground in 2003-04 from funds specifically provided by the government on its transfer to TfL, and the use of these reserves in 2004-05.

This GLA figure is exceptional and is mainly due to the draw down of elections reserve built up over four years.

Table 2	MPA £m	LFEPA £m	TfL £m	LDA £m	GLA £m	GLA Group £m
Budget requirement 2004-05	2,343.3	388.4	25.8	Nil	56.3	2,813.8
Inflation	69.0	13.5	163.1	-	2.7	248.3
Full year cost of existing services	97.7	1.4	148.9	47.4	-10.3	285.1
New initiatives	71.8	0.8	140.3	-	1.6	214.5
Savings and efficiencies	-73.0	-7.5	-39.2	-	-0.5	-120.2
Change in grants	-22.2	7.1	71.0	-47.4	-0.5	8.0
Change in use of reserves	1.7	-0.3	-489.9	-	11.6	-476.9
Budget requirement 2005-06	2,488.3	403.4	20.0	Nil	60.9	2,972.6

Table 3	MPA <sup>2</sup>	LFEPA	TfL	LDA	GLA	Collection fund	GLA Group <sup>2</sup>
Council tax precept 2004-05	£184.08	£42.30	£9.09	Nil	£7.04	-£1.18	£241.33
Increase for 2004/5	£12.20	£1.85	-£2.10	-	£1.14	£0.20	£13.29
Council tax precept 2004/5	£196.28	£44.15	£6.99	Nil	£8.18	-£0.98	£254.62

Note 2: The Metropolitan Police District does not include the City of London and therefore a Band D council taxpayer in the City will pay £58.34, an increase of £1.09.

# Managing Flood Risk in Your Area



ENVIRONMENT  
AGENCY

The Environment Agency is the leading public body protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales. It's our job to make sure that air, land and water are looked after by everyone in today's society, so that tomorrow's generations inherit a cleaner, healthier world. Tackling flooding is a major part of our work.

## Managing Flood Risk

Five million people live in natural floodplains in England and Wales. It's our responsibility to reduce the risk of flooding to people and property from rivers and the sea. We provide and maintain the majority of permanent flood defences and advise local authorities on the impacts of new developments on or near floodplains. When flooding occurs we work with emergency services, local authorities and water companies to provide emergency response. We provide the latest flood warning and flood forecasting information and despatch our emergency response teams to clear debris from rivers and weirs to keep rivers free flowing.

## Flood Warning Service

Flood warnings are vital for those who have homes or businesses in the floodplain. We monitor river levels 24 hours a day, seven days a week and offer flood warnings by telephone, fax, internet and through the media. Our warnings help those at risk take action to reduce damage and minimise risk to life.

Find out if you are at risk of flooding by checking our new online Flood Map at [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/floodline](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/floodline) or by calling our 24-hour Floodline on 0845 9881188.

## Funding our expenditure

The majority of our funding comes direct from the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in the form of grant in aid. This is supplemented by a regional levy on County and Unitary Authorities and London Boroughs.

We are increasing our capital expenditure to contend with the increasing flood risk. Expenditure in the Environment Agency's Thames Region is shown next.

<b>Total Thames Region Expenditure</b> <b>(all figures are in £000s)</b>	<b>2004/5</b>	<b>2005/6</b>
Estimated Gross Expenditure	72,776	81,742
Estimated Net Expenditure	70,834	79,842
Levies Requirement	8,173	8,896
Number of Employees (full time equivalents including temporary staff, but excluding support services)	685	681

## Movements from 2004/2005 to 2005/2006 (all figures are in £000s)

Changes in levies requirements attributable to:

a) Inflation	1,452
b) Changes in quantity of services paid from region	7,514
<hr/>	
Sub-total being change in expenditure	8,966
c) Increase in Government funding/ Other income	3,526
d) Change in use of reserves from 2004/5 to 2005/6	4,717
<hr/>	
<b>Total change in levies requirement</b>	<b>723</b>

# Lee Valley Regional Park Authority



The Lee Valley Regional Park Authority was established by Act of Parliament in 1966 to regenerate, develop and manage some 10,000 acres of the Lee Valley, which had become largely derelict, and transform it into a unique leisure and nature conservation resource for the benefit of the whole community.

## Budget Changes – 2004/2005 to 2005/2006

	<b>£000</b>
Levied from local taxpayers in 2004/05	10,598
Inflation	263
Service Developments	337
Revenue Savings	(76)
Other Increases in Cost	70
<b>Levied from local taxpayers in 2005/2006</b>	<b>11,192</b>

# Council Tax reductions



## Valuation of properties

If you have a query about your property you should contact the Listing Officer of the Valuation Office at:

**2nd Floor, 1 Francis Grove, Wimbledon, London SW19 4DT. Telephone 020 8276 8600.**

Council Tax was introduced on 1 April 1993. Homes were placed in bands based on house prices at 1 April 1991. A general rise or fall in prices since that date does not mean you can appeal on your banding.

Since December 1993 you can only challenge the band your property has been placed in if one of the following occurs.

- The balance between residential and business use within a property has changed.
- The property has been converted from a house to flats.
- A Listing Officer has changed a banding without a proposal having been made by a taxpayer.
- The Court has altered the band of a similar property.
- When you become the taxpayer of a property for the first time. You must make your appeal within 6 months of you becoming the taxpayer. You can only appeal if there has not been an appeal relating to your property before.
- There has been a significant increase or reduction in the property's value. This applies where:
  - Your property has increased in value as a result of building or alteration. Any increase in banding is put off until the property is sold. The new taxpayer then has a right to appeal against the new banding.
  - Your property has reduced in value because of demolition, changes in the physical area or an adaptation to make the property suitable for someone with a disability.

## Reduction for the Disabled

If anyone needs special facilities (such as an extra room) to meet needs related to a disability, you may be entitled to a smaller bill. We may reduce the bill to that of a property in the band below.

You can only apply for a discount or relief (reduction) on your bill if you do not already have one.

Please send any claims to Corporate Services Department, Merton Civic Centre.

Alternatively, telephone the number shown on your bill. If your bill shows that we have given you a discount or relief and your circumstances change, you must tell us immediately. If you do not, you may face a penalty charge.

Other reductions available are exempt property and Council Tax Benefit - please see your council tax bill for more information.

## Appeals

You can appeal against your council tax if you think your property is exempt, or that there has been a mistake calculating your bill. If you want to appeal you must tell us in writing, stating the reasons. You must continue to pay your bill while we deal with your claim. We will refund you any money you have overpaid if your appeal is successful.

If the appeal is unsuccessful we will give you details of an independent tribunal which you can refer your appeal to.

**If you make an appeal you must continue to pay your bill until we settle the appeal.**

## Discounts

You may be entitled to a 25% discount off your council tax bill if you are the only person (aged 18 or over) living in a property.

We work out council tax by assuming that at least two adults are living in the property. However, we do not count some people when we work out how many adults live in the property. This may allow you to receive a discount even if you do not live alone.

These are:

- Full-time students, student nurses, apprentices and youth training trainees;
- 18 and 19 year olds who are at, or who have just left, school or college;
- patients in hospital;
- people being looked after in care homes;
- people staying in certain hostels or night shelters;
- care workers working for low pay (usually for charities);
- people who care for someone with a disability who is not their husband, wife, partner, or a child under 18;
- members of visiting Armed Forces and certain international institutions;
- foreign diplomats;
- members of religious communities (monks and nuns);
- people in detention; and
- the severely mentally impaired.

If all residents living in a property fall under one or more of the discount categories, we treat the property as being empty and apply a 50% discount.

For the purpose of council tax, a 'resident' means a person aged 18 or over who has their sole or main residence in the property concerned.

Therefore we do not consider people under 18 and people in any of the discount categories when we decide how much tax you should pay.

You may be entitled to a 10% discount if your property is empty and furnished. We will need to know your main residence before giving you your discount. Please note that the level of discount varies across the country as each local authority sets its own discount amount.

## Exemptions

There are certain categories of domestic dwellings that are exempt from council tax. For a list of the exemptions please see your council tax bill.

## Council Tax Benefit

If you are on a low income or income support you may be entitled to Council Tax Benefit. The amount of benefit you get depends on:

- how much money you have coming in;
- the amount of savings you have;
- your personal circumstances; and
- how much council tax you pay.

If you want to apply for benefit contact the Benefit Service at the civic centre or phone 020 8274 4901.

---

## Making work for yourself?

### **Do you worry about paying your bill on time? Then pay by Direct Debit!**

Advantages include:

- you can choose out of three monthly payment dates (the 8th, 18th or 28th) under the assurance of the Direct Debit guarantee;
- you can choose to pay over 12 months instead of 10;
- you will help keep down the costs of collecting council tax.

## Interested?

It is easy to set up Direct Debit. Simply complete the mandate form attached to your council tax bill. Alternatively, you can phone our staff on 020 8274 4904 and take advantage of our Fast Track Direct Debit Service.

---

# Council Tax and Benefit Enquiries



You can now contact us 24 hours a day by telephone, email or via our website

## Telephone

Simply call this local charge number at any time:

**08459 400 170**

You will hear a simple menu listing all the information that is available on the service.

If you want a short cut to the most popular sections, you can use Hot Keys to take you straight to the information you need.

At the start of your call you will be asked if you know the Hot Key number of the service you require - simply press the relevant number on your phone from the list below.

## Council Tax Enquires

- Hot Key 1** How we set this year's council tax amount and where we spend your money.
- Hot Key 2** Valuation Bands; exempt dwellings; discounts and disabilities; what to do if you think your bill is wrong; and a full explanation of your council tax bill.
- Hot Key 3** To request a form / tell us about:
- moving in or out of a property in the borough;
  - applying for a discount, including single person's allowance;
  - a change in your circumstances; and
  - applying for an exemption for an empty property.
- Hot Key 4** How you can pay, and applying for Direct Debit.
- Hot Key 5** Help if you are having difficulties paying your bill.
- Hot Key 6** If you have received a reminder letter, summons or notice of a bailiff visit.

## Benefit Enquires

- Hot Key 7** To ask us to send you a application form for benefit.
- Hot Key 8** To ask us to send you a 'Change in Circumstance' form.
- Hot Key 9** You disagree with a decision we have made and want us to look at your claim again, or you wish to appeal.
- Hot Key 0** To check on the progress of a claim.

## Email

Simply send a blank email (you don't have to type a message) to: **[mertonrb@latestinfo.co.uk](mailto:mertonrb@latestinfo.co.uk)**

We will immediately send you a full list of information, advice, forms and services that you can access through email. You then simply pick the subject that you want from the list and follow the on-screen instructions to get the information or service.

## Website

Visit our website at **[www.merton.gov.uk](http://www.merton.gov.uk)** and follow the links to Council Tax or Benefits.

## Ten most frequently asked questions

### 1. Why has my bill gone up?

Council tax is a tax on property that helps pay for local services. Every year we set a budget for the amount of money we need and the Mayor of London sets the Greater London Authority (GLA) precept.

### 2. What is the GLA charge, and what does it cover?

The GLA group charge covers the money they need for areas such as the GLA, London Fire and Emergency Planning, Transport for London, Met Police Authority and London Development Agency.

### 3. What services does my money pay for, and can I get a reduction if I don't use them?

The services the money pays for are listed in previous pages of this leaflet. They include local services such as social services, schools and refuse collection. There are no reductions for people not using these services.

### 4. What is my banding and why is it so high?

Your property was placed in a band based on an "open market" assessment of its value at 1 April 1991. The Listing Officer of the Valuation Office decides the band of your property and places it on a valuation list in one of eight valuation bands (A to H).

### 5. Can I appeal against my banding, and how do I?

Yes, you can challenge the band your property is in. You should write to the Listing Officer at 2nd Floor, 1 Francis Grove, Wimbledon, London, SW19 4DT. You can phone the Listing Officer on 020 8276 8600.

Your appeal must be within six months of you becoming the taxpayer for a property. A general rise or fall in house prices is not grounds for an appeal on your banding.

### 6. Can I claim a discount, and how do I apply for one?

This will depend on your circumstances. There are details about discounts on pages 10 and 11 of this booklet and on the council tax web pages. The most common discount we give is for people living on their own. You can claim this by calling 020 8274 4901. You can also claim discounts by applying in person at the civic centre, visiting [www.merton.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.merton.gov.uk/counciltax) or by sending an email to [local.taxation@merton.gov.uk](mailto:local.taxation@merton.gov.uk)

### 7. Can I change my Direct Debit date?

Yes, however there are only three dates you can choose from: the 8th, 18th or 28th of the month.

### 8. Can I take longer than ten months to pay?

You can pay by 12 instalments if you are a Direct Debit payer. We will give you 12 instalments or less, depending on the date we process your application.

### 9. I haven't got my bill yet - can you send me a copy?

For the new financial year your bill should arrive by 1 April. If you need another copy please phone us on 020 8274 4903.

### 10. Can I claim any benefit to help pay my council tax?

Yes, Council Tax Benefit is available to individuals and couples who are on low incomes and have limited savings. To claim the benefit you must be liable for paying the tax and normally live in the property you are liable for.

You must continue to pay the full amount of council tax while we assess your benefit claim. For an application form or for more information please visit the civic centre in person, phone our contact centre on **020 8274 4903** or visit **[www.merton.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.merton.gov.uk/benefits)**

# Cut your Council Tax



## How could I pay less?

Council Tax Benefit could help reduce your council tax bill if you are on a low income, even if you own your own home.

## How is Council Tax Benefit worked out?

We will work out if you qualify for help, taking account of your individual circumstances. This will include your age and whether you live alone.

## What should I do next?

You should apply straight away - Council Tax Benefit is available now.

To apply, please fill in the coupon on this page and send it to the address at the bottom.

You can get more information about Council Tax Benefit by visiting [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk) or [www.merton.gov.uk/benefits](http://www.merton.gov.uk/benefits)

If you claim Pension Credit, Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance you will also get a form to claim Council Tax Benefit with your application.

To claim Council Tax Benefit, fill in this coupon and send it back to us.

**I want to claim Council Tax Benefit. I have checked my council tax bill and there is no Council Tax Benefit at the moment.**

Signature: .....

Name: .....

Date: .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

Postcode: .....

Council Tax Account Number:

.....

Post to: Merton Benefits Service,  
PO Box 610, Morden, SM4 5ZT.

We will then send you a claim form for Council Tax Benefit. The claim form will tell you what we need from you to work out your entitlement.

# Merton Reuse and Recycling Centre

**We provide a Reuse and Recycling Centre for people who live in the borough. To stop non-residents and traders from using the centre we ask residents to bring with them proof that they live in Merton.**

## Resident Pass

Below is a Resident Pass for you to cut out and bring along as proof of address. Please use a pen to write the registration of your car in the box. Display your pass in the driver's side of the windscreen of your car, where it can be clearly seen, or show it to a member of staff as you enter the site.

Using the pass will speed up getting into the centre and reduce queuing. We can accept a recent council tax statement or driving licence as other forms of identification.

## Vehicle restrictions

There is a height barrier at the entrance set at 1.93m (6'4"). Only residents in cars are allowed in the centre for safety reasons. If you arrive in a van, high-sided vehicle or with a trailer you **will not** be allowed into the centre. We will direct you to the waste transfer site entrance, where you might be charged.

Managers of the centre have the right to refuse entry to any person, particularly if that person is using abusive behaviour.

## You can find the Reuse and Recycling Centre at

Amenity Way  
off Garth Road  
Morden  
SM4 4NJ

## Opening Hours

The site is open for residents in cars from 8am to 4pm, seven days a week.  
It is closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

## Enquiries

Waste Helpline:  
020 8274 4902

Email:  
esenquiries@merton.gov.uk

Web:  
[www.merton.gov.uk/recycling](http://www.merton.gov.uk/recycling)

**Please make every effort to recycle as much waste as you can by separating your waste into the appropriate bays at the centre.**

Thank you.

## Pass Instructions:

- 1 Cut out and keep the pass.
- 2 Write your car registration number (one only) in the white box marked Car registration number.
- 3 Place pass on righthand side of the windscreen or dashboard or show staff at entrance to centre.



# Council Telephone Numbers

---

Please make your enquiry by  
calling our contact centre on

**020 8274 4901**



---

Out of hours Emergency Line: 020 8543 9750

---



**Waste Helpline:  
020 8274 4902**

Cover photos, starting top left to right:  
Merton Civic Centre - Morden  
Mitcham Clock Tower  
Raynes Park High School  
Wimbledon Library  
Merton Link - Morden  
Holland Gardens - Raynes Park