

COTSWOLD DISTRICT



your guide to Council Tax 2015-16



Cotswold District
Council

Gloucestershire
County Council

The Police And Crime
Commissioner For Gloucestershire

Welcome to our annual guide outlining the services we provide for residents in Gloucestershire. Sometimes people are unsure how we spend their council tax. This booklet deals with the facts - and explains in a clear and uncomplicated way what you're getting for your money. You can also find out details of how to pay; discounts & exemptions, and what help is on offer.

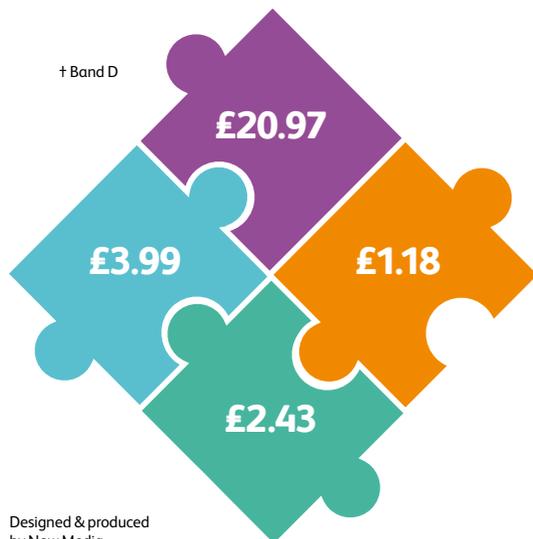
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This year, the average[†] home will pay **£28.57** each week, split as follows:

† Band D



County Council

Education, social care, fire service, roads, libraries

Police and Crime Commissioner

Crime reduction, safer communities, criminal justice, peace & good order

District Council

Rubbish collection, housing, benefits, planning, sport & leisure

Parishes and Town Councils

This document comprises part of your council tax demand notice.



This booklet can be recycled in your kerbside box. Printed on paper from sustainable forests.



We're top of the league again with 5% council tax reduction!

We have reduced our share of your council tax bill for 2015-16 by another 5% - this is the biggest cut in the country and also means that we have reduced payments by 13% over a three year period. In fact, taking inflation into account, and our two year freeze prior to these cuts, this actually amounts to a real-terms cut of about 30% over five years.

Our ongoing efficiency drive, including closer working with several other councils and innovative use of information technology, continues to ensure that cuts to our funding have little impact on the services we provide directly to you. These savings have enabled us to not only freeze prices for parking, green waste, and most leisure and Museum costs for three years; but also to actually reduce building control fees by 10% next year following a period of frozen charges. Looking ahead, we have embarked on

the 2020 Vision transformation programme with other local councils which should save Cotswold taxpayers £8.2 million over a ten-year period.

Motorists have also benefited from new incentives such as our 30 minute car parking tariff across all our car parks, and our £50 off-peak plus season ticket. We have also embarked on a major car park refurbishment programme to make improvements that you have requested.

We've continued to tackle flooding risks through a rolling programme of major schemes, and have played a major role in the establishment of the Cotswold Flood Action Group - a multi-agency response to flooding problems.

Thanks to you, we are maintaining a healthy recycling rate - the best in Gloucestershire - which ensures that we save almost £1.7 million on landfill costs each year. However, it is still costing us £1.25 million each year to bury waste and we're keen to work with you to prevent even more waste going to landfill.

You are our priority and we will continue to work efficiently to ensure that you get the best possible value for your council tax.



Call **01285 623 000** or visit www.cotswold.gov.uk
Follow us on **CotswoldDC**

CONTACT US

- Waste and recycling collections
- Council tax support and housing benefit
- Council tax
- Environmental health
- Housing
- Community safety - neighbourhood issues
- Planning

Corinium Museum
01285 655 611

Moreton Area Centre
01608 650 881

LEISURE CENTRES

Bourton
01451 824 024

Chipping Campden
01386 841 595

Cirencester
01285 654 057

Fairford
01285 713 786

Tetbury
01666 501 086

As part of our work we need to share some personal information (e.g. names and addresses) with partner authorities and related service providers; further information on our duties under the Data Protection Act 1998 can be found on the Council's website.

Together we can

This year, Gloucestershire County Council faces its newest financial challenge to **save £75m between now and 2018**. At the same time, we're **freezing council tax for the fifth year** and still prioritising adult care. There's also money for roads, schools and safeguarding.

To make these savings we have to start doing things differently so we can be there for those who need us most.

In the 1940s and 50s, people tended to turn to their families, friends and communities when they needed support. Over the years, things gradually changed and we have more customers than ever. Healthcare has improved so people with complex problems are living longer needing ongoing support. Couple that with a continued reduction in our funding and we start to see a growing gap

between what people expect us to do and what we can actually afford.

Visit gloucestershire.gov.uk/togetherwecan to find out more.

GOOD TRACK RECORD
We've a good track record of saving £114m over the past four years whilst still protecting the most vulnerable people.



HOW WE SPEND YOUR MONEY

Children & Families £94.3m

Protecting children from harm, providing education support, children's centres and looking after children in care

Adult Care £143.7m

Providing support for older people including social care, learning disabilities, independent living and adult education



Communities & Infrastructure £84.9m

Looking after your roads, Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service, public transport, waste disposal, trading standards and libraries

Public Health £24.9m

Helping you stay fit and healthy, anti-smoking and support with ageing well

Support Services £18m



Our plan

Creating active individuals

Intervention and support to help people make the right life choices, like being fit and healthy, encouraging people to do more for themselves and their families in their own communities.

Creating active communities

Communities offering support closer to home. Investing in communities and building on existing support to signpost people to what they need within their own communities.

Getting people back to independence

Investing in providing intensive packages of support that focus on a quick recovery following an injury or trauma. We want to help people to get back to normal as soon as possible and reduce the need for long term care.

There when we're needed most

Working with our partners to provide specialist, acute support for those who really need our help. We will target this care to people with complex needs and help them to make decisions about the long term care that is right for them.

We know it works



Last year, every councillor had £40,000 to give to local communities to support activities promoting health and wellbeing. The Active Together Scheme is running again this year, so talk to your local councillor or find out more at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/activetgether



The county council has teamed up with local employers and charities to help build a vibrant job market for people with disabilities. Gloucestershire has more people with learning disabilities in work than anywhere else in the country (19%), supporting people to live independent and fulfilling lives.



Having reliable fast broadband is crucial for residents and businesses. Fastershire is helping to make sure our rural communities are connected by the end of 2015. You can check if faster broadband is available to you at www.fastershire.com



Fostering and adoption are top priorities for us. Thirty children were placed for adoption last year and 43 new foster carers approved. We are always keen to hear from those looking to foster or adopt. It takes about six months to become approved and there's lots of support available to you. Find out more at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/fostering & www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/adoption

How much you pay

Which band?

Your property has been assessed for council tax in one of eight valuation bands (A-H) according to its estimated sale value at 1 April 1991. The table below shows the council tax payable for each band for this year.

If you are a band D payer, £126.40 will go to Cotswold District Council, £207.73 will be going to the Police and Crime Commissioner and £1,090.50 will go towards services supplied by the county council.

The right band

There are very few circumstances in which appeals against banding can be made and are restricted to:

- an increase in the property value resulting from building work
- a decrease in the property value due to the demolition of any part of the property, any changes in the physical state of the local area or an adaptation for use by someone with a disability

- a change in the balance between domestic and business use of your property
- Making an appeal does not allow you to withhold payment of council tax. If your appeal is successful we will refund any overpayment.

Next step

A council tax payer can ask the Valuation Office Agency to review their council tax band or can make a proposal to formally challenge their band. Council tax payers need to provide reasons why they believe their banding is incorrect. Further information can be found at www.voa.gov.uk

Appeals can be made at www.voa.gov.uk or telephone **0300 050 1501** or email ctwest@voa.gsi.gov.uk

Appeals can also be made in writing to: **Council Tax West, Valuation Office Agency, Overline House, Blechynden Terrace, Southampton SO15 1GW.**



Email the council tax helpline revenues@cotswold.gov.uk or call **01285 623 033**

Band	Property values (As at 01/04/91)	District (£)	Police and Crime Commissioner (£)	County (£)	Total (£)
A	up to £40,000	84.27	138.49	727.00	949.76
B	£40,001 - £52,000	98.31	161.57	848.17	1,108.05
C	£52,001 - £68,000	112.36	184.65	969.33	1,266.34
D	£68,001 - £88,000	126.40	207.73	1,090.50	1424.63
E	£88,001 - £120,000	154.49	253.89	1,332.83	1,741.21
F	£120,001 - £160,000	182.58	300.05	1,575.17	2,057.80
G	£160,001 - £320,000	210.67	346.22	1,817.50	2,374.39
H	Exceeding £320,000	252.80	415.46	2,181.00	2,849.26

Discounts

Disabled Persons Reductions

Your bill may be reduced if your home has certain features which are essential, or of major importance, to an adult or child with a disability, who lives in the property. These features are:

- a room (other than a bathroom, kitchen or toilet) which is used by the disabled person (eg, a room used for dialysis equipment). Re-arranging rooms used for their normal purpose (eg, a bedroom on the ground floor) would not qualify
- an additional bathroom or kitchen required for the use of the disabled person
- sufficient floor space for a wheelchair

If you qualify we will treat your property as if it is in the valuation band below. eg, if your property is in band C you will pay the council tax for band B. You can still get a reduction if your property is in band A.

Second Homes

Properties that are furnished but not occupied as anyone's main home are classed as second homes. No discount is awarded.

Properties undergoing major repair

Unoccupied and unfurnished properties undergoing structural alteration or major repair are subject to a 100% discount for a maximum period of 6 months. Under the "Fit to rent scheme" this can be extended to 12 months. Visit www.cotswold.gov.uk for details.

Unoccupied and Unfurnished Properties

Properties which are unoccupied and unfurnished will be granted a 100% discount for the first month and 25% discount for the second month. The full charge will then be payable.

Discounts for Annexes

From April 2014 a 50% discount may apply where an annexe is occupied by a relative of the council tax payer for the main property, or where it is used as part of the main property.

An exemption already exists for annexes occupied by elderly or disabled relatives – see page 8.

Long Term Empty Properties

These are properties which have been unoccupied and unfurnished for 6 months or more. No discount is awarded. Where a property has remained unoccupied and unfurnished for 24 months or more an additional 50% premium will be added to the charge.

Discounts

If you live alone your bill will be reduced by 25%. If you, or someone living with you fits into one of the categories below and there are no other adults living in the property, you could also get a reduction.

- full time students, student nurses, apprentices, youth training trainees
- 18-19 year old (at or just left school)
- hospital/hospice patient (permanent)
- residential care/nursing home resident
- persons over 18 in receipt of child benefit
- severely mentally impaired
- hostel/night shelter resident
- member of religious communities
- full time carer (excluding those caring for husband, wife, partner or child)
- persons in detention
- members of International Headquarters and Defence Organisations
- visiting forces
- partners of students who are not British
- diplomats

In extreme circumstances the council has discretionary powers to reduce the council tax payable in respect of individual cases.

Contact 01285 623 033 for more details.

Exemptions

Is your property exempt?

Some properties - both occupied and unoccupied are exempt from council tax. **Please contact us if your property falls into one of these categories.**

Property unoccupied because:

- B** it is owned by and was last occupied for the purpose of a charity (exempt for up to six months)
- D** the owner/tenant is in prison
- E** the owner/tenant is receiving personal care permanently in a hospital or home
- F** the person liable to pay council tax has died, the property has remained unoccupied since the date of death and probate has not been granted. In some circumstances the exemption may continue for 6 months after probate
- G** it is forbidden by law to occupy
- H** it is awaiting occupation by a minister of religion
- I** the owner/tenant is living elsewhere to receive personal care
- J** the owner/tenant is living elsewhere to provide personal care to another person
- K** the owner/tenant has moved to become a student
- L** it has been repossessed by a mortgage lender
- Q** it is the responsibility of a bankrupt's trustee
- R** it comprises a pitch or mooring unoccupied by a caravan or boat
- T** it comprises a self contained unit which cannot be let separately from the main property without breaching planning conditions

Property occupied by:

- M** students in hall of residence
- N** other qualifying students
- O** members of the armed forces in MOD accommodation
- P** members and dependants of visiting forces
- S** person(s) under the age of 18
- U** the severely mentally impaired
- V** people with diplomatic privilege or immunity
- W** elderly or disabled relative living in self contained unit of the main property

Appeals against your council tax liability



If you disagree with some aspect of a council tax bill because you do not think you are liable for the council tax for that dwelling, or you think an exemption or a discount should be applied, you can appeal.

You should appeal to the council in the first instance. If you don't get a response or continue to dispute the decision after the council has responded, you have the right to appeal to the Valuation Tribunal. Contact the council tax helpline on **01285 623 033** for more details.

See page 6 for details about how to appeal against the council tax band.

Pay the easy way

You pay council tax in 10 monthly instalments. The easiest way to pay is by Direct Debit on the 3rd of each month. Contact the council tax helpline on **01285 623 033** to supply your bank details.

Pay by credit* or debit card

Use our 24 hour automated telephone payment system by calling **01285 623 666** or pay online at **www.cotswold.gov.uk**. Choosing this option - instead of paying by cheque - helps keep council tax lower.

*Credit card payments are subject to a surcharge. We are unable to accept Amex or business cards for payments.

Unable to pay?

Your council tax should be paid as requested on your bill otherwise recovery action may be taken which could mean you have to pay additional costs. If you are finding it difficult to pay your council tax please contact us quickly on **01285 623 033** so we can help you. We will be able to spread your monthly instalments over 12 months instead of 10 months if requested.



Help with paying your council tax if you are on a low income

Council tax support helps people on a low income or no income to pay their council tax. The scheme is approved locally for working age customers and nationally for pension age customers.

Council tax support is means tested. The amount of support you can get depends on how much council tax you are due to pay, the number of people in your household, your household income and any savings. The more money you have coming into your home, the less support we can give you.

If you would like further information, an application form or a quick calculation, then either phone **01285 623 035**, email **benefits@cotswold.gov.uk** or call in at the council offices in Cirencester and speak to an officer.

If you need help with paying your rent, then a similar means tested scheme exists called Housing Benefit and you can contact the council using the same options above.



Visit the council tax helpline
revenues@cotswold.gov.uk
or call **01285 623 033**

YOU NEED TO BE REGISTERED

IN ORDER TO VOTE IN THE

ELECTIONS ON 7 MAY

GO ONLINE TO REGISTER

If you don't have access to the internet or can't use it, your local electoral registration staff will be able to help. Please see the contact details at the bottom of the page.



www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

YOUR VOTE MATTERS

MAKE SURE YOU'RE IN



WHAT'S HAPPENING ON 7 MAY?

- UK Parliamentary General Election, District Council and Parish Council Elections



Last day to register to vote
Go online to register

20 April

Last day to apply for a postal vote

5pm on 21 April

Last day to apply for a proxy vote

5pm on 28 April

For an application form to vote by post or proxy
go to www.aboutmyvote.co.uk
or contact the electoral registration staff.

 01285 623002  elections@cotswold.gov.uk

 www.cotswold.gov.uk

 01285 623002  elections@cotswold.gov.uk

 www.cotswold.gov.uk

A message from Gloucestershire's Police & Crime Commissioner

“ I have met many inspirational people in this job and enjoyed many highlights.

So far, these include:

- Gloucestershire Constabulary is now in a secure financial position
- Community and voluntary organisations are linked to the Police and Crime Plan (more details are in this section)
- New custody suite has replaced ageing cells in Gloucester and Cheltenham
- New investigation hub scheduled to open this year
- Ground breaking improvements are being made to the Constabulary's capability for tackling cyber crime
- Long overdue investment in new technology is underway
- Reorganisation of operational policing is on its way.

Forecasting the future is much more difficult as all commissioners have been told to expect further cuts of between 10-20% irrespective of whoever forms the next Government. However, as this is a guide to how your council tax is spent, I can reassure you that the Constabulary is living within its means whilst making important decisions about the future.



The new custody facility, which opened in January, is a good example of a project which was first talked about many years ago but never got off the ground. New technology is another example of an area which has been neglected but to which the Chief Constable and I are committed. We believe better mobile communications will enable the police to provide a service you want as it will keep officers out on the street for longer and free them from the slavery of the desktop computer.

We cannot turn back the clock to when there was a police station, a pub, a school and a post office in most communities. Nevertheless, after a great deal of re-organising and planning, the Chief Constable has produced a new blueprint for operational policing which I believe will maintain the service that Gloucestershire Constabulary has provided for 175 years and which will continue to keep the county safe.

Thank you for playing your part”

Martin Surl
Police and Crime Commissioner

The priorities - the basis of my Police and Crime Plan



- Accessibility and accountability
- Older but not overlooked
- Young people becoming adults
- Safe days and nights for all
- Safe and social driving
- Safer cyber



Less crime, more people and good order

Domestic Violence Prevention Project

The Domestic Violence Prevention Notice/Order project was implemented to follow new national guidance. The project went live in June and provides protection for victims before the case becomes a criminal charge.

Force Control Room

Changes to the telephony and operating systems have resulted in a significant improvement in the police's ability to answer 101 whilst at the same time maintaining the high standard of the 999 service. When members of the public were invited into the Force Control Room, the tours proved so popular they will continue in 2015.

PC Lea Butcher on the Aston Project winning a national award from the Howard League

“It is tribute to the hard work of our young people and our team over the last 2 ½ years, and we would all like to say thank you to our funders, the PCC Martin Surl, and all our many and varied supporters”

A parent who joined his son on a Pathfinder safe driving course supported by the PCC

“Many thanks. My son went from no driving experience at all to relaxed competence behind the wheel and I'm now considerably more confident about him taking driving lessons on the road having already overcome the small issue of actually controlling the vehicle beforehand!”

Deputy Mayor of Dursley Clare Nelmes on Dursley's new youth centre

“We would like to thank the PCC for contributing to the development of the Vibe. It is a good example of how the new youth centre is working with a range of partners to support young people in our community”

FOR MORE INFORMATION



The Police and Crime Commissioner

t 01452 754 348

e pcc@gloucestershire.pnn.police.uk

w www.gloucestershire-pcc.gov.uk

Constabulary

t 101

e 101@gloucestershire.police.uk

w www.gloucestershire.police.uk

In the local community

Most of the projects and organisations funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner affect the Cotswolds directly - or indirectly - as part of countywide schemes.

They include:

BRIGHTER FUTURE PROJECTS - aims to give excluded, marginalised and unemployed young people the chance to learn new skills and improve their employment prospects and personal wellbeing through involvement in practical conservation tasks in their local green spaces.

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME - aims to help older people living in their own homes and in residential care to feel less lonely and isolated, and to feel safer and more integrated with their local community.

TIME TO SHARE - will deliver a common approach to engaging older people through time banking, with specific interventions in each of Cotswolds, Stroud and Gloucester, responding to local need.



Others supported by the Police and Crime Commissioner include:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Pathfinders | Befriending |
| ISIS rural outreach project | Raise |
| Police cadets | Keep Safe |
| Nelson Trust community hub | Safer Communities Workshops |
| Cycle theft crime prevention roadshow | Wheeled Respect (road safety) |
| Voices in nursing homes | Community safety & the night time economy |
| Hate crime reporting | |

Spending plans

Budget Requirement	£000	£000
Constabulary	2014-15	2015-16
Police officers	62,962	60,586
PCSOs	3,952	3,974
Police staff	19,932	21,035
Other running costs	21,712	22,268
Capital financing	3,712	2,538
Expenditure	112,270	110,401
Interest and other income	-2,169	-2,306
Specific grants	-5,123	-4,905
Net expenditure	104,978	103,190
Office of PCC	706	700
Commissioning fund	805	1,205
Total budget	106,489	105,095
Transfer to/ from reserves	0	0
Net budget requirement	106,489	105,095
Funded by:		
Government grant	62,747	60,308
Collection fund surplus	475	761
Which leaves council tax payers to fund	43,267	44,026

The majority of funding for the budget, nearly 60 per cent, comes from general government grant and this funding has reduced by 3.9 per cent for next year.

How our budget compares with last year

Budget Comparison	£000
Original budget 2014-15	106,489
Inflation	1,088
Specific grant changes	218
Additional costs	1,425
Commissioning fund	400
Temporary borrowing costs	240
Planned savings	-4,765
Budget requirement 2015-16	105,095

Investment in the future

The Commissioner plans to spend £5.5m in 2015-16 on capital schemes to improve operational effectiveness and service delivery. This will be paid for from government grants, proceeds from the sale of properties and revenue contributions. The running expenses of new projects are provided for in the revenue budget.

How many staff we employ

The Commissioner has budgeted to employ the full-time equivalent of 1,791 staff in 2015-16 which is 60 less than in 2014-15.

The level of council tax

The band D council tax you will pay this year for services provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner is £207.73, which is the same as last year. The amount we will spend on services will reduce by 1.3 per cent.

Planned savings of £4.8m are included in the budget and the Constabulary needs to identify a total of £16m savings over the four years to 2018-19.



Call **01452 754 348** or visit gloucestershire-pcc.gov.uk. Follow the PCC on Twitter at twitter.com/GlosPCC

Cotswold District Council

Budget requirement	£000	£000
Spending	2014-15	2015-16
Cleansing and waste services	3,719	3,803
Car parking	-1,436	-1,404
Environmental services	2,218	2,155
Planning	1,877	1,679
Leisure and cultural services	1,129	1,250
Housing and sustainable communities	966	989
Democratic representation	1,223	1,161
Corporate management	1,756	1,938
Local tax collection and corporate resources	1,016	1,136
Investment interest and commercial property rents	-570	-497
Funding from earmarked reserves	-247	-30
Capital investment funded from revenue resources	250	250
Capital accounting, provisions and accountancy adjustments	-1,180	-1,265
Investment in flood defence projects	100	100
Total net spend	10,821	11,265
Contributions to/(from) general fund	2	0
Total budget requirement	10,822	11,265
Funded by:		
Central government grants	2,071	1,562
Business rates retention	1,808	2,339
New homes bonus grant	1,950	2,565
Collection fund surplus	84	91
Which leaves council tax payers to fund	4,910	4,708

The level of council tax

For 2015-16 there will be a 5 per cent cut in Cotswold District Council's share of council the tax this year. This means that the charge on an average property (at band D) will decrease to £126.40 for the year. The cut of 5 per cent follows the 3 per cent cut achieved in 2014-15.

The council has carried out a comprehensive review of budgets across all areas to enable costs to remain low. £491,000 in savings have been identified and taken from the base budget as part of the 2015-16 budget process. The council continues to implement efficiencies through sharing officers with other authorities and reviewing every post as it becomes vacant.

The council also collects council tax on behalf of the Town and Parish Councils in the district. The value of Town and Parish precepts in 2015-16 is £2,289,000 this compares to £2,190,000 in 2014-15.

Investment in the Future

The council has planned to invest approximately £4,217,000 (after taking account of capital grants) on capital projects in 2015-16.

The programme of expenditure includes:

- Investment in car parks
- Replacement waste and environmental services vehicles and equipment
- Flood alleviation works across the district
- New equipment at the council's leisure centres

Your money in good hands

The council remains debt-free, with net assets of over £21.4m as at 31st March 2014.

Staffing at the council

Closer ties with West Oxfordshire District Council and its neighbouring councils have resulted in a number of officer posts being 'shared'.

At the end of March 2015 the council estimates it will have in the region of 233 staff (full time equivalents). This compares to 241 staff at the beginning of the year.

Town Councils

Tetbury Town Council		
	Expenditure (£)	
	2014-15	2015-16
General administration	144,996	146,031
Tourist Information Centre	7,000	10,000
Repairs and renewals	64,464	20,351
Running costs	42,060	41,960
Grants and community projects	73,300	36,917**
Loan provision	21,341	16,496
Developments	7,250	0
Total expenditure	360,411	271,755
Income		
Funding from reserves	100,000	0
Council tax	248,611*	258,555*
Income	11,800	13,200
Total income	360,411	271,755

* It should be noted that due to Govt recalculation of the Tax Benefit base, the council tax requirement is made up of £15,523 from Central Govt grant (via CDC) and CDC's recalculated Precept provision of £243,032

** The reduction from £73,300 to £36,917 is due to a one off £50,000 contribution in 2014-15 to the Rail Lands. This £50,000 was taken from TTC reserves.

Cirencester Town Council



In 2015-16, the Town Council element of the council tax for a band D equivalent property is £109.44; an increase of around 15 pence per month per household. Through its financial planning the Town Council seeks to minimise the increase in its core budget whilst maintaining, and aiming to increase, service delivery to the community.

This is a breakdown of how the money is spent:

- **Corporate** (including office accommodation, business rates and insurance)
Expenditure – £196,000 (2014-15 £267,000*)
Income – £53,500 (2014-15 £50,500)
*n.b. employer pension and national insurance costs are now allocated to respective service areas.
- **Office Services** (including administration, postage, stationery and communication)
Expenditure – £114,150 (2014-15 £95,350)
Income – £1,000 (2014-15 £2,000)
- **Estate Services** (including the Abbey Grounds, Amphitheatre, St Michael's Park, City Bank, allotments, play areas, sport, recreation and litter)
Expenditure – £377,700 (2014-15 £289,700)
Income – £35,900 (2014-15 £33,800)
- **Community Services** (including CCTV, children's activities, youth work, outdoor markets, community grants, the mop fair and the Christmas advent festival and lights)
Expenditure – £231,400 (2014-15 £188,500)
Income – £51,500 (2014-15 £56,700)

For information about what we do visit www.cirencester.gov.uk or why not follow us on twitter @Cirentc or be a friend on Facebook; of course we understand if technology is not your thing so please feel free to pop in to our Local Information Centre at Bingham House, Dyer Street.

Gloucestershire County Council

Spending Plans	£000	£000
Service	2014-15	2015-16
Adults	147,258	143,713
Children & families	92,808	94,291
Communities & infrastructure	58,904	57,705
Waste	26,436	27,147
Support services	19,799	18,087
Technical & cross cutting	61,109	54,155
Sub total	406,314	395,098
Public health	21,793	24,934
Net budget requirement	428,107	420,032
Funded by:		
Formula grant	153,443	135,895
Council tax freeze grant	2,488	2,527
NHS funding: social care	11,596	11,596
New homes bonus	2,546	3,676
Education grant (incl statutory element)	6,564	5,332
Other non ring fenced grants	-	961
Council tax surplus	2,543	3,995
Public health grant	21,793	24,934
Council tax requirement	227,134	231,116

Listening to your views

Four years ago we launched our last council strategy: 'Meeting the Challenge'. It set out our response to anticipated reductions in public sector funding and the need to save money across our services. It was the result of extensive consultation with local people and detailed planning by councillors and council officers. It set out how we intended to make £114m of savings.

Four years on, we are on track to achieve that target. We have achieved that by focussing relentlessly on ensuring everything we do reflects what local people need and expect from their council. We have streamlined our organisation, reducing staff numbers, reducing our buildings and finding more and more ways to deliver service efficiently and at a lower cost to the taxpayer.

The level of council tax

The council's band D council tax is £1,090.50, which is the same as 2014-15. This is the fifth year that the council has frozen council tax, utilising government grant.

The 2015-16 budget of £420.032m represents a reduction of £8.1m or 1.89% from last year's figures. Despite the reduction the budget contains:

- £16.58m investment into services, particularly those for older people and vulnerable children and adults
- £3m to cover for increased costs due to inflation
- Funding for £61.82m of new capital investment in roads, schools and other services.

In terms of efficiencies, the council is expecting to make savings of £27.66m in 2015-16, demonstrating the continued commitment to get the most out of funds available and minimise service reductions.

How our budget compares with last year

Budget Comparison	£000
Original budget 2014-15	428,107
Inflation	3,001
Cost and spending increases	16,581
Less cost reductions	-27,657
Budget 2015-16	420,032

Our vision and values

Our vision is to use the resources available to us to improve the quality of life for Gloucestershire people. Our plans are built on three clear values that underpin our direction and decision making. These values will make sure that the council remains flexible and responsive to local people's needs and expectations:

- Living within our means
- Providing the basics
- Helping communities help themselves

Our funding

The funding which the council receives from central government has reduced dramatically in recent years. There have been reductions both in our general funding and in grants for specific services, projects and initiatives and we expect that trend to continue into the foreseeable future. Despite this, the council has avoided passing the cost of these reductions on to local people and for the fifth year running the council will be freezing council tax for local residents.

In 2013-14 responsibility for public health transferred to the council from the NHS, along with a ring-fenced grant. This grant has been extended in 2015-16 to include new responsibilities for 0-5 year olds (health visiting), and is £24.9m.

Schools

The dedicated schools grant is a specific grant funding schools, early year's settings and children's centres. In 2015-16 this grant was announced as £404.5m, excluding funding for two year olds. This represents an increase of £17.1m on 2014-15. The biggest part of the increase was Gloucestershire's £12.3m share of the £390m funding allocated to poorly funded authorities.

Investment in the future

The total capital spend planned for 2015-16 is £113m. £61.8m new capital spend plus £52m existing capital schemes. The majority of spend is planned for schools and facilities for children (£40m) and highways and infrastructure (£70m). All of the new capital investment is being funded from developer contributions, grants and internal resources.

A full budget breakdown is available at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk. Copies are available in libraries or in council offices. For further information about the council's budget write to Joanna Walker, Strategic Finance Director, Gloucestershire County Council, Shire Hall, Westgate St, Gloucester GL1 2TG.

Environment Agency

A proportion of council tax is payable to the Environment Agency for flood defence. For further information please visit www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Changes in the gross budgeted expenditure between the years reflect the impact of the Government Spending Review and national prioritisation of projects.

Severn regional flood and coastal committee		
	2014-15 £000	2015-16 £000
Gross expenditure	9,421	11,544
Levies raised	1,064	1,064
Council tax base	885	901

For 2014-15 we have included Grant Aided Expenditure on all Risk Management Authority Programs. The total local levy raised has remained the same for 2015-16 at £1.064m.

Wessex regional flood and coastal committee		
	2014-15 £000	2015-16 £000
Gross expenditure	36,222	33,771
Levies raised	3,325	3,392
Council tax base	946	961

For 2014-15 we have included Grant Aided Expenditure on all Risk Management Authority Programs. The total Local Levy raised has increased by 2%. The total Local Levy raised has increased from £3.325m in 2014-15 to £3.392m for 2015-16.

Thames regional flood and coastal committee		
	2014-15 £000	2015-16 £000
Gross expenditure	63,731	74,750
Levies raised	10,500	10,700
Council tax base	4,556	4,674

For 2014-15 we have included Grant Aided Expenditure on all Risk Management Authority Programs. The total Local Levy raised has increased by 1.99%. The total local levy raised has increased from £10.5m in 2014-15 to £10.7m for 2015-16.

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