

Council 7(i)

21 February 2024

Report of The Section 151 Officer Authors Chris Hartgrove

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Title Council Tax Setting 2024/25 (including proposed changes to premiums)

Wards affected

Not Applicable

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the Council Tax for 2024/25 in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011). The level of the Council Tax is directly related to the Council's net expenditure after deducting central Government grants and other income sources. Council resolutions also have to adhere to the legislation and recommendations are therefore written in formal language.
- 1.2 The Council Tax for Colchester City Council reflects a Band D charge of £217.92 for 2024/25 (an increase of 2.99% compared to 2023/24). A total Tax Base of 66,132.0 results in an overall Council Tax requirement of £14,411,485.
- 1.3 Individual precepts for the major precepting authorities (County, Police and Fire) and local Town and Parish councils are also detailed, along with Council Tax charges for each band.
- 1.4 The average Band D Council Tax is summarised in the table below.

Element	2023/24 Charge	2024/25 Charge	Increase/(Decrease)		
	£'s	£'s	£'s	%	
Colchester City Council	211.59	217.92	6.33	2.99	
District Council Tax	211.59	217.92	6.33	2.99	
Parish Councils*	35.91 37.81		1.90	5.29	
Local Council Tax (Average)	247.50	255.73	8.23	3.33	
Essex County Council (including Adult Social Care Precept)	1,450.17	1,522.53	72.36	4.99	
Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Police Authority)	233.46	246.42	12.96	5.55	
Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Fire and Rescue Authority)	80.28	82.62	2.34	2.91	
Total Council Tax (Average)	2,011.41	2,107.30	95.89	4.77	

*Parish council charges vary between parishes and are shown as average values in the table for illustration purposes

1.5 This report also considers the impact of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 and its potential impact on Council Tax premiums. Specific recommendations are made to extend existing premiums on empty homes with effect from 2024/25 and introduce premiums on second homes with effect from 2025/26.

2 Recommended Decisions

- 2.1 To note that under delegated authority, the Section 151 Officer, has calculated the Council Tax Base for 2024/25 for the whole Council area as 66,132.0 (Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by the Localism Act 2011) and for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish Precept relates as set out in *Appendix A*.
- 2.2 That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2024/25 in accordance with sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by the Localism Act 2011:
 - (a) £147,347,040 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking account of all precepts issued to it by the Parish Councils
 - (b) £130,435,215 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act
 - (c) £16,911,825 being the amount by which the aggregate at 2(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 2(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act)
 - (d) £255.73 being the amount at 2(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (the amount at (1) above, the tax base), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts)
 - (e) £2,500,340 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish Precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act
 - (f) £217.92 being the amount at 2(c) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 2 (e) above by Item T (1) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates
 - (g) That it be noted that Essex County Council, Essex Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner and Essex Fire & Rescue Service have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each of the category of dwellings in the Council's area
 - (h) That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts in *Appendix C* as the amounts of Council Tax for 2024/25 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings; and
 - (i) That in accordance with section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council determines that the amount of Council Tax shown at 2(f) of £217.92 for 2024/25, representing an increase of £6.33 (2.99%) compared to 2023/24 is not excessive and therefore there is no requirement to hold a local referendum.

- 2.3 That, in accordance with the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, the Council introduces the following changes to Council Tax premiums:
 - (a) With effect from 1st April 2024, extend the 100% Council Tax premium charged on Empty Dwellings to apply with effect from one year (compared to the current two years); and
 - (b) With effect from 1st April 2025, introduce a 100% Council Tax premium charge on Second Homes.

3 Reason for Recommended Decision

3.1 The Council is required, in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by the Localism Act 2011, to formally set the Council Tax for each band, which includes the shares of the precepting authorities.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 The core Council Tax setting elements of the report are defined in statute and, as such, there are no alternative options.
- 4.2 The recommended changes to Council Tax premiums could be rejected, either partially or fully. This would result in the Council (and its preceptors) forgoing any additional Council Tax income generated from the scheme and potentially missing an opportunity to incentivise some homeowners into bringing more domestic dwellings back into full-time use.

5 Background and Introduction

- 5.1 As a district council, Colchester City Council is responsible for the billing and collection of all Council Tax due from local taxpayers. This means that the Council is required to collect Council Tax to cover not only its own services but also the precepts set by other authorities. The Council Tax levied therefore comprises five separate elements:
 - Colchester City Council element
 - Town and Parish Council precepts
 - Essex County Council precept (including Adult Social Care Services)
 - Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Police Authority) precept; and
 - Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Fire and Rescue Authority) precept.
- 5.2 The setting of the Council Tax follows a prescribed timetable, commencing with the setting of the tax base in November, and ending with the formal setting of the Council Tax, which is required has to be completed by no later than 11th March prior to the start of the forthcoming financial year.
- 5.3 The procedure adheres to the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) and the level of Council Tax is directly related to the net expenditure of the Council after deducting income from Government grants and other sources of income. Council resolutions also adhere to legislative requirements and recommendations are therefore written in very formal language.

6 Council Tax Base and Collection Fund Deficit

- 6.1 The Council Tax Base for 2024/25 is 66,132.0 and a breakdown of the calculation by parish can be seen in the first column in *Appendix A*.
- 6.2 After taking account of previous distributions and recoupments, the Council Tax element of the Collection Fund is predicted to have a total surplus of £118,209 at 31st March 2024. The surplus is shared amongst the major precepting authorities i.e., Essex County Council, Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (both Police and Fire & Rescue authorities) and this Council. The distribution of the surplus is made in proportion to the level of each authority's precept for the year. The Colchester City Council share of the 2023/24 surplus is £14,545.

7 Colchester City Council Tax

7.1 The Cabinet recommended a District Council Tax increase of £6.33 (2.99%) for 2024/25 at its meeting on 24th January 2024. This involved setting a General Fund net expenditure budget of £24,959,364.

7.2 The amount of Council Tax that Colchester City Council is to levy is £14,411,485 as presented in the table below.

D	Value		
Description	£'s		
Budgeted Net Expenditure 2024/25	24,959,364		
Add: Contribution to Reserves	153,400		
Subtract: Collection Fund Deficit (Council Tax)	(14,545)		
Subtract: Collection Fund Surplus (Business Rates)	(569,270)		
Net Expenditure (to be financed)	24,528,949		
Less: Retained Business Rates	(6,975,000)		
Less: External Financing	(3,142,464)		
Council Tax Requirement	14,411,485		

7.3 The Colchester City Council Band D Council Tax is therefore £217.92 for 2024/25 (the Council Tax Requirement divided by the Tax Base of 66,132.0). This represents an increase of £6.33 (2.99%) when compared to the Council Tax levied in 2023/24.

8 Parish Precepts

8.1 Each parish has notified the Council with its precept requirement for the year. The total required by parishes for 2024/25 is £2,500,340, which produces an average Band D Council Tax of £37.81. The actual amount levied will vary from parish to parish. A detailed breakdown of the precept requirements and the Band D charge for each parish can be seen in the third and fourth columns in *Appendix A*.

9 Essex County Council Precept

9.1 The total precept demand issued by Essex County Council for 2024/25 is £100,687,954 which produces a Band D Council Tax of £1,522.53. This represents an increase of £72.36 (4.99%) when compared to the Council Tax levied in 2023/24.

10 Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Police Authority) Precept

10.1 The precept demand issued by Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Police Authority) for 2024/25 is £16,296,247, which produces a Band D Council Tax of £246.42. This represents an increase of £12.96 (5.55%) when compared to the Council Tax levied in 2023/24.

11 Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Fire and Rescue Authority) Precept

11.1 The precept demand issued by Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Fire and Rescue Authority) for 2024/25 is £5,463,826, which produces a Band D Council Tax of £82.62. This represents an increase of £2.34 (2.91%) when compared to the Council Tax levied in 2023/24.

12 Council Tax Premiums

12.1 The discretion to charge Council Tax premiums on Empty Homes was introduced by the Government in 2013. The current Colchester City Council policy entails a 100% charge after two years, rising to up to 300% for Dwellings that have remained unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than 10 years. The current policy is summarised the table below.

Colchester City Council Policy Council Tax Premiums on Empty Homes					
Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished after 2 years and up to 5 years of becoming empty.	100% premium				
Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished between 5 years and up to 10 years	200% premium				
Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for 10 years or more	300% premium				

- 12.2 There has been a rise nationally in the number of both empty and second homes, which is exacerbating the supply of affordable housing and homelessness. Inconsistencies in legislation have also been identified whereby premiums can be avoided (e.g. by a taxpayer furnishing empty premises, thereby turning it into a 'second home,' which currently attracts no premium).
- 12.3 The Government has introduced measures within the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 designed to incentivise homeowners to bring more homes into full-time use through giving local authorities greater discretion in charging Council Tax premiums on Empty and Second Homes. This includes the option to extend charging on Empty Homes with effect from 2024/25 and introduce (with 12-months' notice) premiums on Second Homes with effect from 2025/26.

Empty Homes: Proposed Policy Change

12.4 It is proposed to change the Colchester City Council policy on Empty Homes by introducing a 100% Council Tax premium payable after one year (compared to the current policy of two years). The amended policy is presented in the table below.

Colchester City Council Policy Amendment (draft) Council Tax Premiums on Empty Homes (effective from 1st April 2024)				
Dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished after 1 years and up to 5 years of becoming empty.				

Second Homes: Proposed Policy Change

12.5 It is further proposed to change the Colchester City Council policy on Second Homes by introducing a (new) 100% Council Tax premium payable on Second Homes after one year (there are currently no premiums charged on Second Homes). The amended policy is presented in the table below.

Colchester City Council Policy Amendment (draft) Council Tax Premiums on Second Homes (effective from 1st April 2024)			
Premium of 100% charged in addition to 100% Council Tax charge.	100% premium		

12.6 The additional Council Tax raised as a result of the policy changes is expected to be relatively modest for Empty Homes, although the introduction of a 100% premium on Second Homes is likely to result in a greater increase to the Council Tax yield. It is however not possible to prepare robust estimates at this stage and Revenues officers will be undertaking a detailed review of all of the City's potential Second Homes in 2024/25 with a view to ensuring that only genuine Second Homes would be subject to the 100% premium in 2025/26.

13 Strategic Plan References

13.1 The objectives within the Strategic Plan have been used to guide the Budget setting process throughout, including the need to finance a balanced budget and protect core services through a wide range of income and funding sources, including Council Tax.

14 Publicity Considerations

14.1 Arrangements will be made to publish the approved Council Tax charges for 2024/25 in the local press. In addition, a Council Tax Information Leaflet is prepared and distributed with the Council Tax bills in accordance with the legal requirements.

15 Financial Implications

15.1 As set out in the report.

16 Consultation

16.1 The Budget proposals, including the recommended Council Tax increase for 2024, was developed through engagement with all members of the Council and other stakeholders including a separate event for statutory Business Ratepayers held on 20th February 2024.

17 Environment and Sustainability Implications

17.1 All budget measures are assessed for their likely environmental impact, reflecting the Council's commitment to be 'carbon neutral' by 2030. Environment and Climate Change is a core theme of the Strategic Plan.

18 Equality and Diversity Implications

18.1 Consideration will be given to equality and diversity issues in respect of budget changes proposed as part of the budget process. This will be done in line with agreed policies and procedures including production of Equality Impact Assessments where appropriate.

19 Standard References

19.1 There are no direct Human Rights, Community Safety or Health and Safety implications as a result of this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Town, Parish & Local Council Tax 2024/25

Appendix 2: Local Council Tax 2024/25: All Bands

Appendix 3: Total Council Tax 2024/25: All Bands

Background Papers

None.

Appendix A

Town, Parish & Local Council Tax 2024/25

Boxted	624.3	64,763.00	103.74	217.92	321.66
Chappel	221.6	17,850.00	80.55	217.92	298.47
Copford	686.4	55,862.00	81.38	217.92	299.30
Dedham	941.1	43,574.00	46.30	217.92	264.22
East Donyland	882.2	93,896.00	106.43	217.92	324.35
East Mersea	125.7	7,814.00	62.16	217.92	280.08
Eight Ash Green	720.2	40,129.00	55.72	217.92	273.64
Fingringhoe	343.6	13,136.00	38.23	217.92	256.15
Fordham	333.1	36,180.00	108.62	217.92	326.54
Great Horkesley	1,075.7	45,116.00	41.94	217.92	259.86
Great Tey	392.1	20,773.00	52.98	217.92	270.90
Langham	507.7	24,148.00	47.56	217.92	265.48
Layer Breton	134.0	0.00	0.00	217.92	217.92
Layer de la Haye	728.7	20,674.00	28.37	217.92	246.29
Layer Marney	98.1	0.00	0.00	217.92	217.92
Little Horkesley	88.4	5,803.00	65.64	217.92	283.56
Marks Tey	944.8	70,816.00	74.95	217.92	292.87
Messing cum Inworth	177.7	24,986.00	140.61	217.92	358.53
Mount Bures	109.0	3,409.00	31.28	217.92	249.20
Myland	6,389.5	121,212.00	18.97	217.92	236.89
Stanway	4,341.5	364,200.00	83.89	217.92	301.81
Tiptree	3,710.5	398,085.00	107.29	217.92	325.21
Wakes Colne	263.9	14,915.00	56.52	217.92	274.44
West Bergholt	1,394.1	120,932.00	86.75	217.92	304.67
West Mersea	3,196.8	373,287.00	116.77	217.92	334.69
Winstred Hundred	490.5	15,342.00	31.28	217.92	249.20
Wivenhoe	2,888.6	440,415.00	152.47	217.92	370.39
Wormingford	192.9	10,891.00	56.46	217.92	274.38
Town, Parish & Local Council Tax Totals	32,968.0	2,500,340	75.84	217.92	293.76

Note – the Council's overall Taxbase is 66,132.0. 49.85% of the Taxbase (32,968.0) is liable for both District and Parish charges. The remaining 50.15% of the Taxbase (33,164.0) is liable for the District charge only.

Local Council Tax 2024/25: All Bands

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
Parish	£'s							
Abberton & Langenhoe	171.78	200.41	229.04	257.67	314.93	372.19	429.45	515.34
Aldham	197.49	230.41	263.33	296.24	362.07	427.90	493.73	592.48
Birch	183.81	214.45	245.09	275.72	336.99	398.26	459.53	551.44
Boxted	214.44	250.18	285.92	321.66	393.14	464.62	536.10	643.32
Chappel	198.98	232.14	265.31	298.47	364.80	431.12	497.45	596.94
Copford	199.53	232.79	266.05	299.30	365.81	432.32	498.83	598.60
Dedham	176.15	205.50	234.87	264.22	322.94	381.65	440.37	528.44
East Donyland	216.23	252.27	288.31	324.35	396.43	468.50	540.58	648.70
East Mersea	186.72	217.84	248.96	280.08	342.32	404.56	466.80	560.16
Eight Ash Green	182.43	212.83	243.24	273.64	334.45	395.25	456.07	547.28
Fingringhoe	170.77	199.22	227.69	256.15	313.08	369.99	426.92	512.30
Fordham	217.69	253.97	290.26	326.54	399.11	471.67	544.23	653.08
Great Horkesley	173.24	202.11	230.99	259.86	317.61	375.35	433.10	519.72
Great Tey	180.60	210.70	240.80	270.90	331.10	391.30	451.50	541.80
Langham	176.99	206.48	235.99	265.48	324.48	383.47	442.47	530.96
Layer Breton	145.28	169.49	193.71	217.92	266.35	314.77	363.20	435.84
Layer de la Haye	164.19	191.56	218.93	246.29	301.02	355.75	410.48	492.58
Layer Marney	145.28	169.49	193.71	217.92	266.35	314.77	363.20	435.84
Little Horkesley	189.04	220.54	252.06	283.56	346.58	409.58	472.60	567.12
Marks Tey	195.25	227.78	260.33	292.87	357.96	423.03	488.12	585.74
Messing cum Inworth	239.02	278.85	318.70	358.53	438.21	517.87	597.55	717.06
Mount Bures	166.13	193.82	221.51	249.20	304.58	359.95	415.33	498.40
Myland	157.93	184.24	210.57	236.89	289.54	342.17	394.82	473.78
Stanway	201.21	234.74	268.28	301.81	368.88	435.94	503.02	603.62
Tiptree	216.81	252.94	289.08	325.21	397.48	469.74	542.02	650.42
Wakes Colne	182.96	213.45	243.95	274.44	335.43	396.41	457.40	548.88
West Bergholt	203.11	236.96	270.82	304.67	372.38	440.08	507.78	609.34
West Mersea	223.13	260.31	297.51	334.69	409.07	483.44	557.82	669.38
Winstred Hundred	166.13	193.82	221.51	249.20	304.58	359.95	415.33	498.40
Wivenhoe	246.93	288.08	329.24	370.39	452.70	535.00	617.32	740.78
Wormingford	182.92	213.40	243.90	274.38	335.36	396.32	457.30	548.76
Other Areas (non parish)	145.28	169.49	193.71	217.92	266.35	314.77	363.20	435.84

Appendix C

Total Council Tax 2024/25: All Bands

Parish	Reduced Band A	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s
Abberton & Langenhoe	1,171.80	1,406.16	1,640.52	1,874.88	2,109.24	2,577.96	3,046.68	3,515.40	4,218.48
Aldham	1,193.23	1,431.87	1,670.52	1,909.17	2,147.81	2,625.10	3,102.39	3,579.68	4,295.62
Birch	1,181.83	1,418.19	1,654.56	1,890.93	2,127.29	2,600.02	3,072.75	3,545.48	4,254.58
Boxted	1,207.35	1,448.82	1,690.29	1,931.76	2,173.23	2,656.17	3,139.11	3,622.05	4,346.46
Chappel	1,194.47	1,433.36	1,672.25	1,911.15	2,150.04	2,627.83	3,105.61	3,583.40	4,300.08
Copford	1,194.93	1,433.91	1,672.90	1,911.89	2,150.87	2,628.84	3,106.81	3,584.78	4,301.74
Dedham	1,175.44	1,410.53	1,645.61	1,880.71	2,115.79	2,585.97	3,056.14	3,526.32	4,231.58
East Donyland	1,208.85	1,450.61	1,692.38	1,934.15	2,175.92	2,659.46	3,142.99	3,626.53	4,351.84
East Mersea	1,184.25	1,421.10	1,657.95	1,894.80	2,131.65	2,605.35	3,079.05	3,552.75	4,263.30
Eight Ash Green	1,180.68	1,416.81	1,652.94	1,889.08	2,125.21	2,597.48	3,069.74	3,542.02	4,250.42
Fingringhoe	1,170.96	1,405.15	1,639.33	1,873.53	2,107.72	2,576.11	3,044.48	3,512.87	4,215.44
Fordham	1,210.06	1,452.07	1,694.08	1,936.10	2,178.11	2,662.14	3,146.16	3,630.18	4,356.22
Great Horkesley	1,173.02	1,407.62	1,642.22	1,876.83	2,111.43	2,580.64	3,049.84	3,519.05	4,222.86
Great Tey	1,179.15	1,414.98	1,650.81	1,886.64	2,122.47	2,594.13	3,065.79	3,537.45	4,244.94
Langham	1,176.14	1,411.37	1,646.59	1,881.83	2,117.05	2,587.51	3,057.96	3,528.42	4,234.10
Layer Breton	1,149.72	1,379.66	1,609.60	1,839.55	2,069.49	2,529.38	2,989.26	3,449.15	4,138.98
Layer de la Haye	1,165.48	1,398.57	1,631.67	1,864.77	2,097.86	2,564.05	3,030.24	3,496.43	4,195.72
Layer Marney	1,149.72	1,379.66	1,609.60	1,839.55	2,069.49	2,529.38	2,989.26	3,449.15	4,138.98
Little Horkesley	1,186.19	1,423.42	1,660.65	1,897.90	2,135.13	2,609.61	3,084.07	3,558.55	4,270.26
Marks Tey	1,191.36	1,429.63	1,667.89	1,906.17	2,144.44	2,620.99	3,097.52	3,574.07	4,288.88
Messing cum Inworth	1,227.84	1,473.40	1,718.96	1,964.54	2,210.10	2,701.24	3,192.36	3,683.50	4,420.20
Mount Bures	1,167.10	1,400.51	1,633.93	1,867.35	2,100.77	2,567.61	3,034.44	3,501.28	4,201.54
Myland	1,160.26	1,392.31	1,624.35	1,856.41	2,088.46	2,552.57	3,016.66	3,480.77	4,176.92
Stanway	1,196.33	1,435.59	1,674.85	1,914.12	2,153.38	2,631.91	3,110.43	3,588.97	4,306.76
Tiptree	1,209.33	1,451.19	1,693.05	1,934.92	2,176.78	2,660.51	3,144.23	3,627.97	4,353.56
Wakes Colne	1,181.12	1,417.34	1,653.56	1,889.79	2,126.01	2,598.46	3,070.90	3,543.35	4,252.02
West Bergholt	1,197.91	1,437.49	1,677.07	1,916.66	2,156.24	2,635.41	3,114.57	3,593.73	4,312.48
West Mersea	1,214.59	1,457.51	1,700.42	1,943.35	2,186.26	2,672.10	3,157.93	3,643.77	4,372.52
Winstred Hundred	1,167.10	1,400.51	1,633.93	1,867.35	2,100.77	2,567.61	3,034.44	3,501.28	4,201.54
Wivenhoe	1,234.43	1,481.31	1,728.19	1,975.08	2,221.96	2,715.73	3,209.49	3,703.27	4,443.92
Wormingford	1,181.09	1,417.30	1,653.51	1,889.74	2,125.95	2,598.39	3,070.81	3,543.25	4,251.90
Other Areas (non parish)	1,149.72	1,379.66	1,609.60	1,839.55	2,069.49	2,529.38	2,989.26	3,449.15	4,138.98