

Where the money comes from

The money that we spend on your behalf comes from different areas.

Council tax

For every £1 in council tax you pay we receive **12p**, Hertfordshire County Council receives **77p**, and the Police and Crime Commissioner receives **11p**.

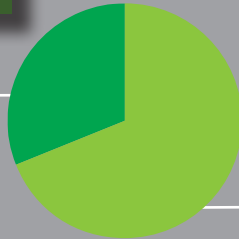
Business rates

We also get a share of the money we collect from business rates.



The money we get

Business rates
£2.7 million

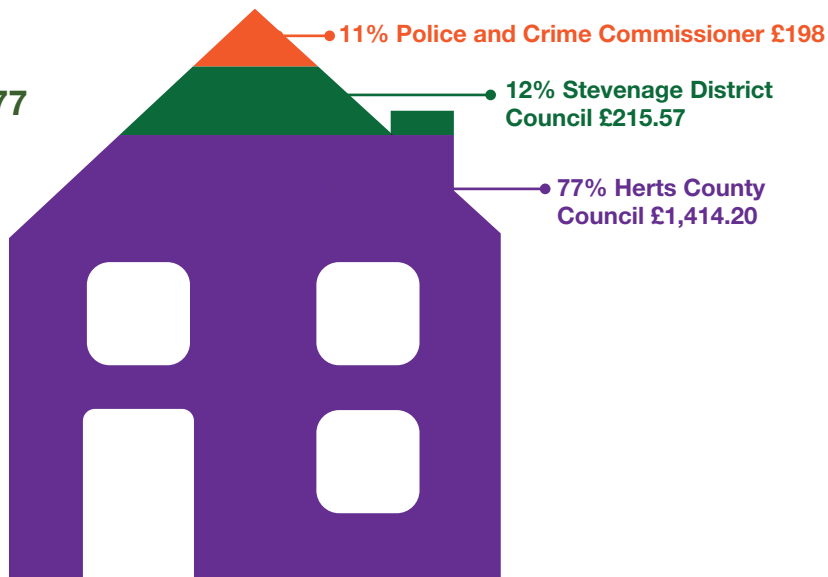


Council tax
£6.1 million

Total £8.8 million

Where the money goes

100%
Band D
£1,827.77



As part of the budget process this year we had to identify £0.75 million in savings for 2020/2021 due to government grant reductions.

What we spend on services:

2019/2020 (£m)			2020/2021 (£m)	
Gross	Net	Services	Gross	Net
2.5	1.6	Community services	2.6	1.7
6.5	5.7	Cultural and leisure services	7.0	5.5
1.3	1.3	Housing (excluding Housing Revenue Account)	1.3	0.6
3.4	2.4	Planning and regeneration	3.8	2.8
3.5	1.6	Refuse and recycling	3.4	1.7
3.0	(1.7)	Transport and parking	3	(1.8)
33.3	0.7	Housing Benefits	28.0	0.4
4.1	(4.5)	Commercial properties and garages	3.8	(4.7)
10.1	1.7	Other	12.5	2.9
	8.8	Sub Total		9.1
	0	Contribution to/(from) balances		(0.3)
	8.8	Budget Requirement		8.8

How our budget has changed from last year

Our (net) budget for 2020/2021 is £9,069,830.

	£	£
Budget 2019/20		8,802,520
Inflation	770,520	
Changes in spending		
Growth in services	163,470	
Service pressures	372,750	
Other changes	(124,050)	
Other increases in income and efficiency savings	(864,640)	
Budget options approved for prior years	(50,740)	
Net decrease		267,310
Net budget requirement 2020/21		9,069,830

What is council tax?

There are more than 87,000 people living in Stevenage and we also provide services for people who work in and visit the town.

The council tax paid to **Stevenage Borough Council** helps to pay for **refuse collections, recycling, street cleaning, leisure centres, parks and playgrounds, Stevenage Museum** and many other services provided by Stevenage Borough Council.

The council tax paid to Hertfordshire County Council helps to pay for road maintenance, street lighting, education, social services and libraries that are provided by Hertfordshire County Council.

The council tax paid to Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire helps pay for the policing service in Hertfordshire.

There is one bill for every home, whether it's a house, bungalow, flat or mobile home - owned or rented.

Council tax 2020/2021

The amount per head is calculated using information supplied by the Government's Office for National Statistics.

Details of the make-up of your council tax	2019/2020		2020/2021	
	Total amount £	Total per head £	Total amount £	Total per head £
Stevenage Borough Council's budget requirements	8,754,074	99.82	8,720,800	99.33
Paid for by:				
Revenue support grant from central government	0	0	0	0
Non-domestic business rates	2,562,580	29.22	2,665,314	30.36
Collection fund adjustments	436,583	4.98	66,885	0.76
Stevenage Borough Council council tax requirement	5,754,911	65.62	5,988,601	68.21

This table shows what is included in the council tax for a band D property.

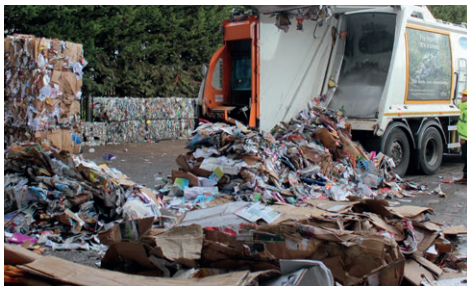
Details of the make-up of your council tax	2019/2020		2020/2021	
	Total amount £	Band D council tax £	Total amount £	Band D council tax £
Stevenage Borough Council's net requirement	5,754,911	210.57	5,988,601	215.57
Hertfordshire County Council's net requirement	34,549,093	1,264.15	35,870,718	1,291.21
Hertfordshire County Council's Social Care Precept	2,617,931	95.79	3,416,748	122.99
Hertfordshire County Council's Total	37,167,024	1,359.94	39,287,466	1,414.20
Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner net requirement	5,138,012	188.00	5,500,579	198.00
Total	48,059,956	1,758.51	50,776,645	1,827.77

How much do you have to pay?

The amount you pay depends on the valuation band your home is in. The Valuation office Agency, part of HM Revenues and Customs, carries out all valuations. Your council tax bill states what band you are in.

Valuation Band	Valuation Band £	Stevenage Borough Council £	Herts County Council £	Herts CC Social Care £	Herts CC total £	Herts Police & Crime Commissioner £	Total £
Band A	Up to and including 40,000	143.71	860.82	81.98	942.80	132.00	1,218.51
Band B	40,001 to 52,000	167.67	1,004.26	95.67	1,099.93	154.00	1,421.60
Band C	52,001 to 68,000	191.62	1,147.75	109.32	1,257.07	176.00	1,624.69
Band D	68,001 to 88,000	215.57	1,291.21	122.99	1,414.20	198.00	1,827.77
Band E	88,001 to 120,000	263.47	1,578.16	150.31	1,728.47	242.00	2,233.94
Band F	120,001 to 160,000	311.38	1,865.07	177.66	2,042.73	286.00	2,640.11
Band G	160,001 to 320,000	359.28	2,152.03	204.97	2,357.00	330.00	3,046.28
Band H	More than 320,000	431.14	2,582.42	245.98	2,828.40	396.00	3,655.54
% increase since last year		2.37%	1.99%	2.00%	3.99%	5.32%	

The average Stevenage home (Band C) will pay £191.62 for 120 Stevenage Borough Council services. That includes:



£54.52 for weekly refuse and recycling collections,



£25.60 for children's services,
£14.85 for supporting local groups and communities,



and £20.77 for housing and homelessness support (in addition to our house building and tenancy services).

Although income from property and other areas means council tax payers only pay around 60% of these costs.

Check your band is correct

The Valuation Office Agency sets the band for your property. This is based on property values on 1 April 1991 (if built after this, it would be valued as if it had been built then and not what a property is worth today). We charge you council tax based on their assessment.

Many residents do not know that they can challenge a council tax band by:

- making a formal challenge to the Valuation Office Agency or
- simply asking the Valuation Office Agency to check it (the right to ask the Valuation Office Agency to check their band is not limited by time).

You can contact the Valuation Office Agency, where you can compare your band with any other property at: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/valuation-office-agency or telephone **03000 501501**.

Appealing against the band you are in

Stevenage Borough Council has no influence on the band. You should contact the Valuation Office Agency directly.

You can appeal against the band your home is in if you have just moved in. You must appeal within six months of moving in.

You can appeal if you think there has been a material change (reduction) in the value of the property – at any time.

If you want more details about the bands, or details of how to appeal against the band for your home, please contact the Valuation Office Agency by telephone 03000 501501 or write to: **Council Tax East, Valuation Office Agency, Ground Floor, Ferrers House, Castle Meadow Road, Nottingham, Notts, NG2 1AB** or email cteast@voa.gsi.gov.uk

You must continue to pay your council tax while you make your appeal. If the appeal is successful you will be refunded any overpayment.

Ways to pay

You can pay your council tax:

- in one payment for the whole year (in April)
- by 10 monthly instalments (April to January)
- over 12 months – please contact us to arrange.

How to pay your council tax

The council's web address is www.stevenage.gov.uk/pay

All you need is your account reference number to check your balance and make a payment using our online service. We accept all major debit and credit cards except American Express or Diners Club.

Direct debit. You can now arrange to do this online at www.stevenage.gov.uk/council-tax/ and click on the setup a Direct Debit

Customer Service Centre. All you need is your account reference number to check your balance and make a payment by debit card, cheque or cash at the Payment Kiosk in our Customer Service Centre.

Post Office. You can pay by debit card, cheque or cash at any post office using your plastic payment card. If you do not have a plastic payment card, please contact us

and we will arrange for one to be issued to you.

Telephone payments. All you need is your account reference number to check your balance and make a payment. You can pay by debit or credit card by calling **01438 242345** at any time to pay via the automated payments.

Bank Giro Credit. Complete a bank giro credit slip at your bank and make a payment to the council. The council's bank sort code is 40 43 36 and the account number is 11549200. Quote the council tax reference number which is printed on the front of your bill.

What happens if you don't pay?

We will send you a reminder notice if you miss a payment or your payment is late.

You will lose the right to pay by monthly instalments if you do not pay after we have sent you a reminder or if we have to send you more than two reminders in any financial year.

We have the right to collect unpaid Council Tax through the magistrates' court. You will have to pay additional costs if we have to do this.

If you have difficulty paying please contact us as soon as possible so that we can discuss your situation.

Council tax discounts

The full council tax assumes that there are two qualifying adults, over 18 living in a dwelling (as their main home). If one adult lives in a dwelling, a 25% discount will apply.

Second home

If you have a second home which is substantially furnished, but is not your main home, you are required to pay the full charge.

Discounts for unoccupied properties

From 1st April 2017 there is no discount for:-

- Empty and Unfurnished properties, or for Empty (and unfurnished) properties undergoing major repairs or structural work. So you pay the full charge.
- For Empty and Unfurnished properties which are empty for 2 years and over these will pay 150% of the Council Tax.

From 01/04/2014 a new discount was introduced for 'family annexes'

Many annexes in Stevenage are exempt from council tax but, from 1 April 2014, a new council tax discount of 50% was introduced for family annexes that are not exempt.

If you currently have an annexe that is lived in by a family member or used by the resident of the main dwelling, you can receive a 50% council tax discount.

The new discount is not based on occupation or furniture but on use of the annexe by the resident of the main building or occupation by a family member. If a non-family member occupies an annexe the family annexe discount will not apply.

If your property is exempt from council tax

You may be exempt from council tax on certain occupied and unoccupied properties.

This includes properties only occupied by:

- people under the age of 18
- students
- UK armed forces accommodation
- diplomats – people who have diplomatic immunity
- people who are severely mentally impaired, including those with Alzheimer's
- annexes where a dependent person – who is 65 or over or is severely mentally impaired or substantially and permanently disabled – lives next door to relatives in an annexe or granny flat.

It also includes unoccupied properties that may qualify if they are:

- owned by a charity
- where the council tax payer is deceased and probate application has been made but has yet to be granted.
- where occupation is prohibited by law
- held for a minister of religion
- where a mortgagee is in possession
- left unoccupied by a bankrupt
- unoccupied annexes which may not be let separately from that of the other dwelling

- where the person is detained elsewhere
- where the person is living in a care home or hospital
- where the person is away providing or receiving care elsewhere
- an annexe which forms part of a single property but cannot be let separately from that of the other dwelling
- property left empty by a student (who owns the property).

Discounts (disregards)

Certain people can be 'disregarded' for council tax purposes subject to meeting an entitlement criteria. This means that we do not count them when we are looking at how many adults live in the property. People who are disregarded include:

- people who are severely mentally impaired, included those with Alzheimer's
- people who normally live in the property but are currently in prison
- people in respect of whom child benefit is payable
- full-time students, student nurses, apprentices and youth training trainee
- hospital patients where it is their sole or main residence (not returning home)

- patients in care homes where it is their sole main residence
- people caring for someone who is not a spouse, partner or child under the age of 18
- people staying in hostels or night shelters with no fixed abode
- school leavers under the age of 20
- members of visiting forces
- spouses of foreign students
- members of religious communities.

If you are entitled to a discount, the amount will appear on your bill. Your discount may be affected if your circumstances, or the circumstances of any member of your household, change or if anyone joins or leaves your household. You must tell the Revenues division of any changes in your circumstances. If you fail to do so, you may incur a £70 fine.

If you think you might be entitled to an exemption or discount please visit www.stevenage.gov.uk and under Council Tax select discounts or exemptions or email us at **revenues@hertspartnership-ala.gov.uk**

People with disabilities

Your council tax may be reduced if you or someone who lives with you has a disability. This could be an adult or a child.

We may be able to reduce your council tax bill where it is essential for the person with the disability to have:

- an additional room required to meet the needs of the disabled person (but not a kitchen or bathroom)
- a second bathroom or kitchen
- sufficient spaces for use of a wheelchair indoors which must be used indoors.

The council tax will be reduced to the band immediately below your existing band.

For more information please visit www.stevenage.gov.uk and under Council Tax select reductions for people with disabilities or email us at **revenues@hertspartnership-ala.gov.uk**

Council Tax Support scheme

On 1 April 2013, a new Council Tax Support scheme was implemented, following the Government's decision to abolish Council Tax Benefit.

New legislation makes it necessary for every council to devise their own Council Tax Support schemes and to set local rules about how much help certain people will get towards their council tax bills. Pensioners are not affected by these changes.

As a result of this, all working-age customers entitled to Council Tax Support must now pay the first 8.5% of their council tax bill.

Council Tax Support and Benefits

Many people in Stevenage aren't applying for the support they may be entitled to.

If you are not sure if you may qualify for help, check with us. Depending on your circumstances, you might be entitled to benefits you don't know about.

To apply for Support - An application form can be completed on our website www.stevenage.gov.uk

Go to "Benefits – New Claim".

You can visit our Customer Service Centre in Danestrete for benefits advice. It is open from 8.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday.

New Government Measures.

There are new Government measures for assistance with council tax and business support, please see www.stevenage.gov.uk for the latest information.

Let us know if your circumstances change

If you are getting a discount or exemption and your circumstances change, for example if your partner is now living with you, you must let us know.

Please contact us within 21 days at our website at www.stevenage.gov.uk and select 'Council Tax' and then select 'Council tax - individual account enquiries incl. new accounts' and then click the Council tax account enquiry

Or write to us within 21 days at:

**Revenues Service
Wallfields Pegs Lane
Hertford SG13 8EQ**

If you or someone on your behalf can't write to us telephone 01438 242875 between 9am and 5pm

Monday to Friday, textphone (for textphone users) 01438 242555 or email revenues@hertspartnershipala.gov.uk and we will help.

If you fail to tell us, you may incur a £70 fine.

Help with your finances

Credit Union

Stevenage Credit Union is a local community loans and savings organisation offering a safe way to save or get low interest loans. For further information or to join, contact the Credit Union at:

**11 The Hyde
Hydean Way
Stevenage
Hertfordshire
SG2 9SD**

Telephone: **01438 740844**

Email:

mail@stevenagecreditunion.com

It's open Monday to Friday from 9am to 12pm.

Citizens Advice Bureau

If you have lots of debts or are concerned about changes to benefit entitlements, speak to one of the Citizens Advice Bureau's trained advisors for free, confidential and impartial advice on these and many other issues.

They are open weekdays. Speak to them face-to-face:

**Daneshill House
Danestrete Stevenage
SG1 1 BT**

Get information on their 24-hour advice line: telephone: **03444 111444.**

Opening times now face to face
10:00 - 15:30 Monday,
Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and
appointments are only available
Wednesday 10:00-12:30

Or Telephone 10:00-16:00
Monday to Friday

Appeals

You can appeal if you think any of the information on your council tax bill is incorrect.

Write to:

**Revenues Service
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford
SG13 8EQ**

If you or someone on your behalf can't write to us, telephone 01438 242875 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday, or email revenues@hertspartnership-ala.gov.uk or for Council Tax Support Appeals please call 01438 242440 or email benefits@hertspartnership-ala.gov.uk and we will help. You must still pay your council tax in the meantime.

This leaflet gives you information about council tax. We can make it available in different languages, Braille and large print upon request. We also have access to interpreting services for people who do not speak English. Telephone **01438 242242**.

Stevenage Borough Council administers the collection of council tax in partnership with East Hertfordshire District Council. By sharing this service, the cost of collecting council tax is kept down, the service becomes more resilient and good performance can be maintained.

The staff working in the partnership are based in Hertford, but customers may continue to make council tax enquiries at Stevenage Borough Council's Customer Service Centre, Monday to Friday between 8am and 6pm by telephone and between 8.30am and 5.30pm in the walk-in centre. For council tax support enquiries please call **01438 242440** between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.