

Council Tax 2024/25 Explanatory Notes

Paper copies of all the documents on-line are also available on request by telephoning the Customer Contact Centre on 01462 474000 or by writing to the Council.

To request a copy of Herts County Council documents:

- email: contact@hertfordshire.gov.uk
- write to: **Hertfordshire County Council, PO Box 153, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 2GH**
- call: **0300 123 4040**

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

If you are on a low income, even if you own your own home, the Council Tax Reduction Scheme could help towards some or all of your Council Tax bill. If you feel you may qualify for a Council Tax Reduction but have not yet applied, please do so straight away as applications cannot normally be backdated.

If you are in receipt of Universal Credit or have made a recent application, please ensure that you also make a claim for Council Tax Reduction, this is NOT an automatic process.

You can apply online: www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/benefits/apply-benefits or call **01462 474597**.

Those already receiving Council Tax Reduction will have their entitlement for **2025/2026** shown on their bill. Our scheme changed recently and some customers may now have to pay Council Tax, where they have previously not had too.

If you feel that your Council Tax Reduction is incorrect and or you are unhappy with the calculation, you can appeal to the Valuation Office Agency at www.gov.uk/voa/contact However the grounds for appeal are restricted to the Councils own Council Tax Reduction scheme which can be found on the Councils web site.

To appeal you will need to advise what it is that you are appealing, not just that you don't agree with something.

Obligation to advise the Council of changes in your circumstances

Council Tax bills will be sent to all residents even where the award of an Exemption, Discount or 100% Council Tax Reduction will mean that no Council Tax is due. This is to ensure that those residents are aware that an Exemption, Discount or Reduction has been awarded.

Where an Exemption or Discount has been awarded you must notify the Council within 21 days if this is incorrect or if there is a future change in circumstances affecting the Exemption or Discount, email: Counciltax@north-herts.gov.uk

Where Council Tax Reduction or Housing Benefit has been awarded, any changes should be notified to the Council immediately, as failure to do so, may result in a Civil Penalty, email: benefits@north-herts.gov.uk

Council Tax Instalments

The Statutory Instalment Scheme for Council Tax is for payment to be made over 10 instalments, from April to January in each financial year. Council Tax payers may however opt to pay over 12 instalments, if they wish. If you have already opted to pay over 12 instalments, this will be reflected on your bill.

If you wish to pay over 12 instalments, you must contact the Council on **01462 474000**. When calling you will need to be prepared to pay your April instalment if you have not already done so, otherwise it will not be possible to reset the instalments for the remaining 11 months. Payment over 10 instalments enables the Council to better manage its cash flow and avoids the need for any borrowing to ensure that payments to the other Precepting Authorities, in particular Hertfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire can be made without the need for any short term borrowing, which in itself could result in increased Council Tax. It also means that in normal circumstances, Council Tax payers have no payments to make in February and March each year.

Direct Debit is the most cost-effective means of paying your Council Tax and the Council offers five payment dates for Direct Debit payments, either 1st, 8th, 15th, 25th or 28th day of each month.

If you do not already pay by Direct Debit and wish to do so, please go to:

www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-tax/how-pay-your-council-tax

If you wish to receive your bill electronically, please go to:

www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-tax

Council Tax Recovery – Accounts in arrears

The Council will continue to take recovery proceedings against those who do not pay in accordance with the instalments. It is particularly important that payment is made as explained on the bill as a failure to do so has a detrimental effect on the Council's cash flow, which ultimately results in increased Council Tax for all.

The payment methods available are explained on the bill.

The Council will do all it can to assist those having difficulty in meeting their payments, but it is essential that you contact us immediately on **01462 474595** or email **recovery@north-herts.gov.uk** if this is the case.

The Council is very aware that some customers may still be financially affected by the pandemic situation, and we would urge you to contact us if this is the case. We can often make longer term payment plans with you if you are struggling to pay because of this. We may ask you to provide us with some evidence of how you have been affected.

In addition, the Council can provide further guidance on how to seek help from various independent Agencies if you are experiencing financial difficulties.

If you are having difficulty paying, please contact us on **01462 474595**.

Second Adult Reduction

If you do not qualify for a Single Occupant Discount because you are not the only adult living in your property or you lose this discount because somebody already living with you has now reached the age of 18, you may be entitled to a Second Adult Reduction if the other person is on a low income.

Please note: The application must be made by the person that is liable to pay the Council Tax and not the second adult.

This scheme is only available to persons who have reached state pension retirement age.

If you can say 'Yes' to all of the following criteria, you may qualify;

- Are you the person solely responsible for paying the Council Tax?
- Are you of state pension retirement age?
- Do you have someone living with you, over the age of 18 who is not your partner or civil partner and not paying you rent on a commercial basis?
- Are they on a low income? Your income and savings do not count – It is only the income of the person living with you that matters.

If you would like to find out more about Second Adult Reduction, please contact our Housing Benefit Team on **01462 474000** or visit the website at **www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/benefits/second-adult-rebate**

Your personal information

North Hertfordshire District Council is under a duty to protect the public funds it administers. The information you provide to us may be used for the prevention and detection of fraud. We may also share this information with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds for these purposes. For further information, see the Council's website at **www.north-herts.gov.uk/fairprocessing** or email: **data.controller@north-herts.gov.uk**

Self service

You can apply online for many services at **www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-tax**

E billing: reduces the needs for a paper bill

Single Occupier Discount: if you are the only person living in the property over the age of 18

Inform us you have moved:

Please note: if you are moving, please do not tell us more than 28 days before your planned moving date.

Pay by Direct Debit: we offer 1st, 8th, 15th, 25th & 28th of the month

Apply for Disablement Relief: if you have adapted your property and it meets the qualifying criteria

Apply for a reduction for Students: if your course meets the qualifying criteria

Most of these electronic forms will automatically update the Council's Council Tax system and will ensure that these requests are processed quickly.

HELPLINES:

Council Tax: **01462 474000**

Benefits: **01462 474597**