

Cabinet Supplementary Information



Date: Tuesday, 5 December 2023

Time: 4.00 pm

Venue: The Council Chamber - City Hall, College Green, Bristol, BS1 5TR

17. Council Tax Base

(Pages 2 - 8)

Issued by: Amy Rodwell, Democratic Services
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Date: Thursday, 30 November 2023





Decision Pathway – Report

PURPOSE: Key decision

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 05 December 2023

TITLE	Council Tax Base 2024/25		
Ward(s)	City Wide.		
Author: Denise Murray	Job title: Director of Finance		
Cabinet lead: Cllr Craig Cheney - Cabinet member for Finance, Governance, Property and Culture	Executive Director lead: Stephen Peacock – Chief Executive		
Proposal origin: BCC Staff			
Decision maker: Cabinet Member Decision forum: Cabinet			
Purpose of Report: 1. To recommend the Council Tax Base for 2024/25 for approval at Full Council.			
Evidence Base: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bristol City Council has the power in statute to raise a tax on households in its area to pay for the provision of local services. It is designated as the Billing Authority for the area. This means that it is responsible for levying a council tax to meet its own demands and to meet the precepts of other authorities in the area. The major precepting bodies are Avon Police and Crime Commissioner and Avon Fire Authority. 2. Section 67 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) requires the Council to determine its tax base for council tax purposes each year. Properties are recorded in eight national bands by value (A to H) as determined the Valuation Office agency. Band H taxpayers pay twice as much as those in Band D and three times as much as those in Band A. The number of properties is expressed as a number of Band D equivalent properties. 3. In accordance with Regulations the Authority must set a tax base for council tax purposes and notify major precepting bodies by 31 January each year. 4. The calculation has been prepared in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 which came into force on 30 November 2012. In October each year. DLUHC requires a snapshot, which is based on the number of properties, of the Tax Base at a specified date in October, net of exemptions, reductions and discounts. This is known as the CTB1 return. A copy of the return for October 2023 is attached as Appendix A to this report. This calculates the number of chargeable properties in the City. Adjustments are then made for discounts and exemptions including those for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS). 5. This report anticipates a continued improvement in collection rates during 2024/25. As a result, the number of Band D equivalent properties, net of exemptions, reductions, and discounts, in 2024/25 is 134,752 which is a 3.93% increase on the adjusted base for 2023/24. 			
Cabinet Member / Officer Recommendations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the report and calculated amount as set out in the report and refer to Full Council for approval. 			

Corporate Strategy alignment: 1. Managing our local tax income well is aligned to the being an effective development organisation. By having good governance and sound financial management of our tax income ensures we deliver good value for money and maximises resources available to deliver all other corporate strategy objectives.
City Benefits: 1. Council Tax provides the largest proportion of income to the Council to provide all services. There are various exemptions, discounts, and reductions available to ensure those who aren't able to pay receive the help they need.
Consultation Details: N/A
Background Documents: N/A

Revenue Cost	£ NIL	Source of Revenue Funding	General Fund
Capital Cost	£ NIL	Source of Capital Funding	N/A
One off cost <input type="checkbox"/>	Ongoing cost <input type="checkbox"/>	Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/>	Income generation proposal <input type="checkbox"/>

Required information to be completed by Financial/Legal/ICT/ HR partners:		
1. Finance Advice: The Council Tax Base is calculated based on data extracted from the CTB1 return completed in mid-October. This is then adjusted for fluctuations in both the housing market and the estimated effect of levels of Council Tax Support, discounts, and exemptions. The impact of each of these is set out in detail in the report. The adjusted tax base of 134,752 in Appendix 1 represents an increase of 3.93% on the adjusted base when compared with 2023/24.		
Finance Business Partner: Tony Whitlock 8/11/2023		
2. Legal Advice: The tax base calculations for 2024/25 set out in this report comply with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council tax base) Regulations 2012. The report will enable the Council to meet the requirement under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) to determine the Council Tax base by no later than 31st January in the preceding financial year.		
Legal Team Leader: Husinara Jones – Solicitor/Team Manager 8/11/23		
3. Implications on IT: No IT implications		
IT Team Leader: Alex Simpson – Lead Enterprise Architect 8/11/23		
4. HR Advice: No HR implications		
HR Partner: James Brereton – Head of HR 8/11/23		
EDM Sign-off	Denise Murray – Director of Finance	10 November 2023
Cabinet Member sign-off	Cllr Craig Cheney	15 November 2023
For Key Decisions - Mayor's Office sign-off	Mayor's Office	15 November 2023

Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal	YES
Appendix B – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external	NO
Appendix C – Summary of any engagement with scrutiny	NO

Appendix D – Risk assessment	NO
Appendix E – Equalities screening / impact assessment of proposal	NO
Appendix F – Eco-impact screening/ impact assessment of proposal	NO
Appendix G – Financial Advice	YES
Appendix H – Legal Advice	YES
Appendix I – Exempt Information	No
Appendix J – HR advice	YES
Appendix K – ICT	NO
Appendix L – Procurement	NO

Bristol City Council has the power in statute to raise a tax on households in its area to pay for the provision of local services. It is designated as the Billing Authority for the area. This means that it is responsible for levying a council tax to meet its own demands and to meet the precepts of other authorities in the area. The major precepting bodies are Avon Police and Crime Commissioner and Avon Fire Authority.

1.1. Section 67 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) requires the Council to determine its tax base for council tax purposes each year. Properties are recorded in eight national bands by value (A to H) as determined the Valuation Office Agency. Band H taxpayers pay twice as much as those in Band D and three times as much as those in Band A. The number of properties is expressed as a number of Band D equivalent properties.

1.2. In accordance with regulations the Council must set a tax base for council tax purposes and notify major precepting bodies by 31 January each year.

2. Calculation of council tax base

2.1. The calculation has been prepared in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 which came into force on 30 November 2012. In October each year the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) requires a snapshot, which is based on the number of properties, of the Tax Base at a specified date in October, net of exemptions, reductions, and discounts. This is known as the CTB1 return. This calculates the number of chargeable properties in the city.

2.2. This is based on figures as of October 2023 and therefore adjustments are then based on forecast changes expected over the following 18 months for changes in the number of dwellings, changes in discounts and exemptions including those for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The adjusted numbers of properties in each of the eight valuation bands A to H are expressed as numbers of band D equivalents so they may be added together to produce a single figure. The table below shows the tax base and associated year on year percentage increase for the last five years.

Year	Tax Base (Budget Report)	Percentage Increase
2020/21	128,566	1.23%
2021/22	127,950	(0.48%)
2022/23	127,917	(0.02%)
2023/24	129,654	1.36%
2024/25	134,752	3.93%

3. Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)

The CTR scheme currently supports over 32,000 households with the cost of their council tax, of

which 22,430 are working age. The table below shows existing trends in both working age and pensioner claimants, based on October data. Although pensioner claims have levelled off in recent years, it is expected the number of working age claimants will continue to fall, increasing the tax base by 515 band D equivalents in 2024/25.

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Working Age	23,506	25,144	25,211	23,399	22,430
Pensioners	11,239	10,755	10,436	10,166	10,003
Total	34,745	35,899	35,647	33,565	32,433
Percentage increase (reduction)		3.3	(0.7)	(5.8)	(3.4)

4. Single Person Discounts

4.1. Regular reviews continue to monitor the number of properties attracting single person discounts. Currently around 32% of domestic properties are claiming single person discount. This equates to 63,984 properties. Regular data matching from the National Fraud Initiative identifies where there might be multiple occupants in properties claiming single person discount, and this helps to ensure that the Council Tax Base properly reflects entitlements to this discount. A further, more detailed review, will be carried out before the start of the next financial year. It is too early at this stage to estimate the additionality that could be derived to the tax base from this review but any benefits that arise above the collection targets will be captured in the collection fund and reported in January 25 for 2025/26 budgets.

5. Student Exemptions

5.1. Students are entitled to an exemption from paying council tax if everyone in the property is a full-time student. Bristol has a large student population, and as at the end of October the status of all students has not been evidenced to the Council. It is therefore necessary to estimate the number of additional students households likely to be eligible for exemptions as at 1 April each year. Any estimate to be included in the tax base will also take account of any known student related property developments. Student accommodation can take the form of either private housing (class N) or halls of residence (class M). The table below shows the number of students registered for an exemption as at 1 April each year with a projection to the end of March 2024 and March 25. Additional student exemptions are likely to reduce the tax base for 2024/25 by 2,185 band D equivalents.

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 Est	2025 Est
Class M Exemptions	1,242	1,825	1,895	2,518	2,796	3,982
Class N exemptions	7,657	7,199	7,024	7,523	7,550	7,550
Total	8,899	9,024	8,919	10,041	10,346	11,532
Percentage increase/(reduction)		1.4	(1.2)	12.6	3.0	11.4

Additionally, a household may be entitled to a discount if a full-time student lives in the property. These are included within the 'other discounts and exemptions' in the table below.

6. Growth

6.1. In determining the Tax Base for the forthcoming year, the Council can take into account any increase in Tax Base that may arise from the completion of new properties. Given the amount of the on-going property development across the city and, in view of this continuing trend, it is considered reasonable to allow for an element of growth in the Tax Base due to the anticipated completion of new properties in respect of known developments. In estimating the effect on the Tax Base of new properties it is prudent to assume most new properties will be in lower valuation Bands. Allowances must also be made for discounts that will apply in respect of new properties, and for the fact that council tax will only be payable for new properties from the date of completion rather than for a full financial year.

6.2. The 2024/25 estimate for growth uses information provided by the Council's Valuation and Inspection team and is based on the number of new developments in the city where work has commenced. Assumptions are then made as to whether these properties will be banded by the end of the financial year, and for what proportion of the year they may be banded.

6.3. This underlying growth has resulted in 2,733 additional band D equivalents added to the 2024/25 Council Tax Base. Any discounts these properties might attract are accounted for within the 'student exemptions' or as 'other discounts and exemptions' in the table below.

7. Losses on Collection

7.1. In estimating the provision for losses on collection the Council makes an estimate of debts which, after full recovery measures have been affected will be uncollectable in the longer term and therefore recommended for write-off.

7.2. The collection rate for 2023/24 is likely to be around 94%, with a further 2.6% collected against arrears. During 2024/25 we expect to see an on-going recovery and for collection rates to increase. Therefore for 2024/25 the collection rate has been set at 96%. The collection of arrears is estimated to contribute a further 2% to the forecast tax base.

7.3. Risk Assessment

There are a number of risks associated with estimating the amount of Council Tax collected during the year. These include,

- Difficulty in estimating Council Tax discounts and exemptions.
- Estimate of collection rates, arrears, and rate of recovery.
- Impact of the Cost-of-Living crisis

Appendix 1 – Calculation of the tax base

	2024/25 Band D Equivalent Properties- aligned to MTFP	2023/24 Band D Equivalent Properties	Difference
Tax Base as per attached CTB 1 Return	137,066	135,773	1,293
Adjustment due to anticipated growth	2,733	2,726	7
Adjustment due to changes in working age CTS claims	515	0	515
Reduction due to reinstatement of existing student properties not recorded on CTB1	(2,185)	(2,021)	(164)
Other discounts and Exemptions	(627)	0	(627)
Adjusted Tax Base	<u>137,502</u>	<u>136,478</u>	<u>1,024</u>
LESS losses on collection 2% (5% for 2023/24)	(2,750)	(6,824)	4,074
Recommended Tax Base	<u>134,752</u>	<u>129,654</u>	<u>5,098</u>
Percentage increase	3.9319		

This is an increase of 5,098 (3.93%) Band D equivalent properties since the last Tax Base calculation in October 2022.