At South Ribble Borough Council, we continue to work hard to maintain our reputation for delivering excellent, value for money services.

We have achieved this by listening carefully to people and spending in line with their priorities. This is the fourth consecutive year we have frozen Council Tax and similarly the sixth time in the last seven years, in determining our budget for this year, we have frozen Council Tax at 2012/13 levels again honouring our pledge to freeze council tax whilst protecting the quality of our Front Line services.

This guide forms part of your Council Tax bill and contains useful information about the Council Tax and a handy contacts guide is provided on the back page.

The council is no longer required to send information about what we spend as part of the Council Tax bill, this information is now published on the council’s website. This change also relates to the County Council, Police & Crime Commissioner and the Fire Service.

A hard copy of this information is available on request. Not publishing this information on paper is saving all of us money which can be spent on Front Line services.

www.southribble.gov.uk
www.lancashire.gov.uk/council/finance
www.lancashire-pcc.gov.uk
www.lancsfirerescue.org.uk
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**Giving you value for money**

- [www.southribble.gov.uk](http://www.southribble.gov.uk)
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- [www.lancashire-pcc.gov.uk](http://www.lancashire-pcc.gov.uk)
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**What happens If I Do Not Pay?**

If you find that you are unable to make the payments shown on your bill please ring us on 01772 625516 immediately. If you don’t contact us, but simply fail to pay you will receive a reminder notice. If you still don’t pay a Magistrates’ Court summons will be issued so that we can recover the money you owe. We will also ask the court to award costs to the council. You can get free debt advice from Citizens Advice at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) on 0300 330 1313, or from National Debtline at [www.nationaldebtline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldebtline.org.uk) on 0808 808 4000.

The Council also provides a free Personal Budgeting Advice Service at the Council Offices. Please contact us on 01772 421491 for further details.

**Discounts and exemptions**

The most common discount is 25% off the council tax for people who live alone. You may also be able to claim a 25% discount if you are the only person living with any of the following:

- full time students, student nurses, apprentices and youth trainees
- severely mentally impaired people
- 18 or 19 year olds who have just left school
- carers who are looking after someone who is not a partner, spouse or child under 18
- a 50% discount is available for non dependant relatives occupying Annexes which are part of a larger property

Some empty properties are exempt altogether. The most common examples are:

- properties which have been empty and unfurnished for less than 6 months
- uninhabitable properties (exempt for a limited period only)

Some occupied properties are exempt. These include:

- properties occupied solely by the under 18s
- Annexes which are part of a larger dwelling and occupied by elderly or disabled relatives of the occupiers of the larger dwelling
- properties solely occupied by full time students, student nurses, apprentices and youth trainees

**Liability**

The general rule is that the occupier of an occupied property is liable for the council tax. However, there are exceptions (e.g., houses in multiple occupation, occupied by several families or several individuals who are not joint tenants) where the owner is liable. Couples, whether married or not, and joint tenants/owners are jointly and severally liable. Owners are liable for council tax on empty properties.

**How do I pay?**

Please see the back of your bill for methods of payment. The most convenient and effective way of paying your council tax is by Direct Debit. Our experience shows that once customers have signed up to Direct Debit, the need to issue reminders and summons is substantially reduced. More than three quarters of our customers use Direct Debit already.

To set up Direct Debit payments, all you need to do is to telephone 01772 625516 with your bank details and tell us when you wish to pay. We accept council tax payments on any day of the month. We’ll do the rest including confirming your account details and details of your payments in writing.

If you have chosen not to pay by Direct Debit, your instalments will normally be due on the 1st of the month.
**Disability Band Reduction**

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

Where it is essential for the person with the disability to have an additional room, a second bathroom or kitchen, or extra space for wheelchair use, we can reduce your Council Tax bill.

Your bill will be reduced to the amount of Council Tax for a property in the band immediately below your band. If you are in band A, your property will be reduced by one ninth of the band D amount.

A full list of all discount and exemption categories is available at www.southribble.gov.uk

**Empty Property Charges**

From April 2014 if you own a property which has been empty for some time, in support of our empty homes policy, we introduced some additional charges.

- If your property is empty and unfurnished for longer than 6 months; Council Tax will be charged at the full rate.
- If your property is empty and unfurnished for longer than 2 years; Council Tax will be charged at the full rate plus 50%.

These charges don’t apply if your property falls into one of the exempt classes.

**Help with Council Tax for people on a low income**

If you are of pension age Council Tax Support could pay some or all of your bill, depending upon your level of income. If you are of working age you are expected to pay a minimum amount towards your Council Tax, and may receive additional help with your bill depending upon your level of income.

Exceptional Hardship Payments are also available to help meet any Council Tax payments. Payments are granted to people who are in receipt of Council Tax Support and who are experiencing financial difficulty in paying their Council Tax.

If you pay rent for your home, you may qualify for Housing Benefit which will help towards paying your rent. To find out if you’re entitled to receive Council Tax Support or Housing Benefit, simply contact us on 01772 625518 or email benefits@southribble.gov.uk

**Advice**

The Council provides a free Personal Budgeting Advice Service at its Council Offices. Please contact us on 01772 421491 for further details.

Welfare Benefits advice is available from Lancashire County Council on 0300 123 6739 or at www.lancashire.gov.uk/benefits-and-grants. Advice is also available from the Citizens Advice Bureau at 78 Towngate, Leyland on 0300 330 0650 or online at www.citizensadvice.org.uk
IMPORTANT INFORMATION

If your bill shows Council Tax Support, an exemption, discount or disability band reduction and your circumstances change, you are legally obliged to notify the council within 21 days of this change. If you fail to notify the Council you may incur a penalty.

Appeals

To the Valuation Office

Appeals against and queries about valuation bands should be made to:
Council Tax North, Valuation Office Agency,
17th Floor, 53 Portland Street, Manchester, M1 3LD,
Email: ctnorth@voa.gsi.gov.uk  Tel: 03000 501501

If you are considering a banding appeal, you need to consider the following:

- Property values used are those at 1st April 1991. Recent purchase prices are not necessarily the best evidence. Council Tax was introduced on 1st April 1993 and everyone could challenge their banding until 30th November 1993.

- Since 1st December 1993 there are only limited occasions when taxpayers can challenge their banding. These include; after demolition, the conversion of houses into flats or physical changes in the locality affecting property values. You may also challenge your banding within 6 months of: becoming a new council taxpayer, a band change made to your property by the Listing Officer or a band change to a similar property to yours made by the Court.

To the Council

If you wish to appeal against a Council Tax Support decision, liability, refusal of a discount, refusal of exemption or refusal of disabled persons’ relief:

1. Firstly, you should appeal in writing to the Council giving your reasons. Your appeal should be addressed to the Revenues Manager at the Civic Centre. You’ll find our full address on the back page of this booklet.

2. If you do not receive a decision on your appeal within 21 days of writing, or you do receive a decision but disagree with it, you can appeal to:

VT Office Doncaster, Hepworth House
2 Trafford Court, Doncaster,
Yorkshire, DN1 1PN
Tel: 0300 123 2035
Email: VTDoncaster@vts.gsi.gov.uk

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Email: VTDoncaster@vts.gsi.gov.uk
If you are registered for Council Tax it does not mean that you are automatically registered to vote. You need to make a separate application to go on the electoral register.

Under new rules which came into effect in June 2014 each person in the property who is over 18 now needs to register individually. The quickest and easiest way is to register online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

If you do not have access to the internet then you can contact us on 01772 421491. We can either submit your details while you are on the telephone, or you can ask us to send out an application form. Whichever method you choose you will need to provide your date of birth and National Insurance number when you register so that we can verify your identity.

If you change your name, for example by getting married, you will need to complete a form and provide evidence of the change before we can amend your details on the electoral register. If you move house you will need to re-register at your new address.

You can check whether your name is on the electoral register at your current address by calling the above number.
### My Neighbourhood Forums

My Neighbourhood forums give you the opportunity to have a say in your community. Forums enable you to tell us what you think would make your neighbourhood a better place.

You can go along and meet your local councillors and other people from your area, influence decisions on how money is spent and share your ideas for local improvements.

Your neighbourhood forum gets together in a friendly environment four times a year in a place near you - and you’re invited. Keep an eye on our quarterly FORWARD publication and [www.southribble.gov.uk/myneighbourhood](http://www.southribble.gov.uk/myneighbourhood) for forum dates and information.

Each forum has a My Neighbourhood Plan which contains 10 projects – these have been identified by the community as local priorities. We get involved in all kinds of schemes, from festivals to food growing, community centres to cycle routes.

To find out more, visit our facebook pages or contact your local officer, listed to the right.

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<th>My Neighbourhood Plan</th>
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<td><strong>Central</strong>&lt;br&gt;Tardy Gate, Lostock Hall, Farlington&lt;br&gt;Contact: Tony Stirland 01772 625568&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:astirland@southribble.gov.uk">astirland@southribble.gov.uk</a>&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.facebook.com/mycentralforum">www.facebook.com/mycentralforum</a></td>
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<td><strong>Eastern</strong>&lt;br&gt;Samlesbury, Coupe Green, Gregson Lane, Walton-le-Dale, Higher Walton, Bamber Bridge&lt;br&gt;Contact: Imogen Brettell 01772 625224&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:ibrettell@southribble.gov.uk">ibrettell@southribble.gov.uk</a>&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.facebook.com/easternforum">www.facebook.com/easternforum</a></td>
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<td><strong>Leyland</strong>&lt;br&gt;Including Buckshaw Village&lt;br&gt;Contact: Allison Hardman 01772 625327&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:ahardman@southribble.gov.uk">ahardman@southribble.gov.uk</a>&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.facebook.com/leylandforum">www.facebook.com/leylandforum</a></td>
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<td><strong>Penwortham</strong>&lt;br&gt;Contact: Suzanne Simpson 01772 625377&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:ssimpson@southribble.gov.uk">ssimpson@southribble.gov.uk</a>&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.facebook.com/penworthamforum">www.facebook.com/penworthamforum</a></td>
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<td><strong>Western Parishes</strong>&lt;br&gt;Longton, Hutton, New Longton, Walmer Bridge, Little Hoole, Much Hoole&lt;br&gt;Contact: Rebecca Heap 01772 625276&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:rheap@southribble.gov.uk">rheap@southribble.gov.uk</a>&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.facebook.com/westernparishesforum">www.facebook.com/westernparishesforum</a></td>
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Contact us

There are a number of ways you can contact us to discuss any services or facilities provided by South Ribble Borough Council.

You can contact us:

Online:
Visit www.southribble.gov.uk. You can also pay bills securely over the internet using this site.

By email:
You can email your enquiry about council tax, business rates or sundry debtors to revenues@southribble.gov.uk, or email info@southribble.gov.uk with enquiries about all of our other services.

In writing:
You can write to the Council at the address below.

In person:
Just call in to see us at the Civic Centre, West Paddock, Leyland, Lancashire, PR25 1DH. We’re open Monday to Thursday from 8.30am until 5.15pm and on Fridays from 8.30am until 4.45pm.

By phone:
You can direct all general enquiries to our main switchboard on 01772 421491, or refer to the list of services below:

While we welcome your calls at any time, it may be helpful to know our busiest times so you can decide when you would like to contact us.

Our busiest time is Mondays, especially the mornings, and during the lunchtimes between noon and 2pm. Late afternoons are quieter.

To make payments by phone:
Benefits: 01772 625518
Council Tax: 01772 625516

Environmental Health: 01772 421491
FREE Fraud Hotline: 0800 854 440 (confidential service)
Housing: 01772 625518

Refuse collection, recycling, street cleansing and litter: 01772 625625
By fax: 01772 622287
By text: 07776 176981

Emergency Number
(outside office hours only)
01772 625499
Drainage, flooding, highway emergencies, parks, street lights, trees and dangerous buildings.
(This is an answering service that will give you a relevant telephone number)