



Dear Resident,

## **Royal Berkshire Fire Authority - Council Tax Consultation 2020/21**

The Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service revenue budget for 2019/20 is £34.1 million. £4.96 million of savings were delivered between 2010/11 and 2015/16, and a further £2.4 million will have been delivered by March 2020.

Like all public services we are committed to delivering value for money across the services we provide. Two thirds of our funding is received from Council Tax. The other main sources of income are Government funding and Business Rates from local businesses.

Previous Government funding for the Authority was set out in the four-year settlement that ran from 2016/17 to 2019/20. Taking 2015/16 as the base year, Central Government funding has fallen by over 24%.

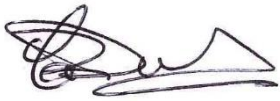
The Authority has been through a significant period of change since 2015, ensuring the Service delivers important outcomes for communities across Royal Berkshire, whilst also balancing the budget. Additional cost pressures have also materialised during this time. Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy additional resources have been put in place to work closely with local authorities and landlords as part of our Protection Policy. A review of our capital assets has also been completed and our fifteen-year Strategic Asset Investment Framework outlines how we will maintain and renew our fire appliances, fire stations and lifesaving IT systems.

We remain in the lowest quartile of precepting Fire Authorities in the Country, delivering value for money to the people we serve, as evidenced by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services' inspection of our Fire and Rescue Service in 2019. Current Government proposals would allow Royal Berkshire Fire Authority to increase Council Tax by up to 1.99% for 2020/21 without holding a referendum, which is an increase of £1.32 per year.

Given the current the economic climate, the Fire Authority gave me a mandate to speak to Berkshire MPs to make them aware of the issues faced and ask for greater flexibility to increase Council Tax when setting the budget. Berkshire MPs have been lobbying Government on our behalf to give the Authority the flexibility to increase Council Tax. In addition, I, along with the Chairs of other Fire Authorities, have been lobbying Government to allow us to raise Council Tax by £5 in 2020/21.

We would be delighted if you could take part in our online survey by visiting [rbfrs.co.uk/haveyoursay](https://rbfrs.co.uk/haveyoursay). The consultation closes on Monday, 3 February 2020, at 5pm.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Dudley', with a stylized, sweeping flourish at the end.

Councillor Colin Dudley  
Chairman of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority