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Dear resident,

Royal Berkshire Fire Authority Budget and Council Tax Consultation 2019-20

The Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service revenue budget for 2018/19 is £33.5 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 the Service's Efficiency Plan 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 central Government funding and business rates from local businesses.

Government funding for the Authority was set out in the four-year settlement that runs from 2016/17 to 2019/20. Taking 2015/16 as the base year, central Government funding will have fallen by over 24% by 2019/20. We expect Government funding to continue to fall in future finance settlements.

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 ten year Strategic Asset and 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. The Fire Authority currently has the ability to raise council tax by up to 2.99% per year without holding a referendum. 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 by up to £5 per year. Our intention is to increase Council tax by 2.99% for 2019/20, which is £1.92 per year. We also wish to ascertain your views on whether you would be supportive of an increase of up to £5 per year in future years, subject to Government agreement.

We would be delighted if you could take part in [our online survey](#) or visiting rbfrs.co.uk/consultation. The consultation closes on 20 February 2019 at 5pm.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Dudley', with a horizontal line underneath.

Councillor Colin Dudley
Chairman of Royal Berkshire Fire Authority