



5th March 2025

Labour councillors vote against 5% Council tax increase

Bexley's Labour Group of councillors voted against Bexley Conservatives 5% increase in Council Tax at tonight's council tax setting meeting. The 2025/26 budget includes a 2.99% increase in the share of Bexley's Council Tax and a 2% increase in the Adult Social Care Precept, a total of 4.99% increase to hard pressed households in Bexley. This follows years of cuts to services and council tax increases.

Cllr. Stefano Borella, Leader of Bexley Labour Group said 'Bexley residents are facing another yearly rise in Council tax rise of £103 per year on a Band D property in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis. This is going to impact on household's finances this year, in addition to the fact that fees and charges like the Garden Waste charge going up by an eye watering 14%. We welcome that the Labour Government has provided more funding to councils this year and welcome the return of multiyear funding settlements from 26-27, the first for 10 years that will provide more financial certainty'

The scale of the issues facing the council's finances is demonstrated by the projected revenue budget overspend of £3.900m (Period 9/December 2024) for 2024/25, which will require the unsustainable use of £3.7m of voluntary Minimum Revenue Position to balance the 25/26, this means the level of earmarked reserves have gone down to £27.7m, which is a risk to the financial sustainability of the council.

The Labour Group opposed the council's decision to reduce the level of each discount band by 5%, through its flawed CTRS (Council Tax Reduction scheme) consultation, changing the range of discounts available to between 5% and 75%. The consultation was inadequate and more could have been done by the council to increase participation. Of those that responded 62% did not agree with the decision the council did take to increase Council Tax liability.

Cllr. Chris Ball, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services said "Under the previous Conservative government from 2010-25 councils lost sixty pence of government funding for every pound they spend, this meant over £140m of cuts since 2011 in Bexley, which has left the council's financial position in a precarious position. This Labour Government has started to fix the foundations and has provided more funding for potholes and homelessness reduction, which is welcome start after years of managed decline"

Cllr Zainab Asunramu, Shadow Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education said "We welcome the increase in funding for Public health, increase in the social care grant of £12.8m and the uplift in the Children's social prevention grant, but we condemn the council's decision for the poorest in society to pay more council tax they can't afford, which will lead to more residents getting into debt'

Please note the Labour Group response to the Council tax reduction scheme (CTRS) consultation.



Bexley Labour Group response to the Bexley Council consultation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

30th October

Bexley Labour group notes the consultation of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS), a policy introduced by the last Government in 2013 to replace the former Council Tax benefit, which made local authorities responsible for implementing their own Council Tax scheme for working age residents.

- With the latest figures from 23/24, showing 29% of accounts with CTRS in arrears, why has no cost benefit analysis been done or been made available, to look at the potential increases in cost of debt recovery and increases in accounts in arrears. Arrears which have been increasing since the last amendment was made to the scheme in 2019.
- The Group are disappointed in the implementation of the consultation process. Why were no present CTRS claimants consulted on the potential changes, any future consultation should include claimants to get a true reflection of views.
- The Group are disappointed that all present Council Taxpayers were not directly consulted, which would have been simple for our contractor Capita to administer.
- The Group believe strongly that the scheme should not be changed and agree with option 9 in the online consultation that CTRS should remain in its present format.
- Local authorities, including Bexley continue to use existing discretionary powers to ensure that military compensation is never treated as income in means tests for locally administered benefits.

Cllr. Stefano Borella

Leader of Bexley Labour Group

FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE BEXLEY LABOUR GROUP