

February 2019

Waltham Forest Town Hall
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Dear resident,

We have been working hard to ensure that the services our residents rely on continue to get better and that everything we do is focused on our aim to help improve our residents' quality of life.

However, since 2010 we have made over £120 million of savings, brought about by a reduction in Government funding. The way that Government funds councils is due to change significantly from 2020 and this directly affects how much Council Tax all of us pay now and in the future.

This reduction in funding, coupled with increased demand for our services, means that Waltham Forest Council, like authorities across the country, will have to put up Council Tax this year.

The Council maintains its strong record of sensible and careful financial management. We are in a stable financial position, unlike many other local authorities which are struggling to balance the books.

To illustrate the increase in pressures and cost of our vital services, for the first time ever, half of our total budget now goes on social care services. These are the children's and adult services that the most vulnerable in our society rely upon. Demand has increased for these services for a variety of reasons, including an ageing population. For this reason, we will need to raise our portion of your Council Tax by 2.99%.

The Government has partially recognised the urgent need for more money to fund adult social care – and in 2016/17 introduced an additional element of the Council Tax charge, called the Adult Social Care Precept. The Council is proposing to raise this portion of Council Tax by 1%. However, the Council remains concerned that it is still nowhere near enough to pay for the growing cost of social care in Waltham Forest.

There will also be an increase in the Greater London Authority (GLA) precept, which includes additional police funding and is outside the control of Waltham Forest Council. This means that council tax will rise by 4.89% overall. For an average household living in a Band D property this would mean an extra £1.52 per week.

We work hard to maximise the money we get from other sources to help deliver improved services for our residents. Perhaps the most successful has been being named the Mayor of London's first London Borough of Culture, an award that came with £1.35 million from the Mayor of London and City Bridge Trust. January's opening event 'Welcome to the Forest' attracted more than 70,000 people. Our exciting programme, taking place across the whole borough, will make the very best use of the money made available from the Mayor of London.

We were also awarded £1.4 million from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for work on connecting communities across the borough, work that will not only help newcomers to the borough, but also help all residents access the vast wealth of community organisations and groups available in Waltham Forest.

On top of this, we have successfully bid for £26 million from the GLA to build more council homes in the borough to help with our aim of ensuring our residents have a decent roof over their head. Building towards this goal, we also aim to increase the amount of affordable housing on new developments in the borough, at the same time as building the key infrastructure improvements that will support this new housing.

We continue to work well with our partners, such as Transport for London, to deliver improvements for commuters and for those travelling around our borough. During the past year, Blackhorse Road Station has seen significant improvements and we are finalising discussions about improvements to Leyton Station, including making it step-free access.

Despite the financial challenges, over the past 12 months alone, the borough has:

- Spent £10.8 million on highways improvements across the borough
- Planted more than 1,500 new trees by the end of this year (2018/19), taking us to more than 50,000 in the borough (the highest figure ever).
- Continued our commitment to improving air quality by supporting cycling initiatives across the borough, including free cycle hire, cycle parking facilities, cycle maintenance checks and training courses.
- Open the Feel Good Too Centre in Leyton following an £11 million investment.
- Invested £25,000 in each ward – a total of £500,000 across the borough – on 59 improvement schemes for local parks, open spaces and play areas.
- Invested £2.1 million in The Junction in Leyton, to provide a ground-floor Family and Children Centre with Adult Learning Services classrooms above, which will host courses leading to work.

Through our new Creating Futures programme we will continue to grow our local economy, create new income sources and invest in health, arts, culture and leisure, while continuing to support residents' life chances with more affordable housing, improving adults and children's services, and getting more people into employment.

Waltham Forest is a great place to live, and we will continue to do all we can to help improve our residents' quality of life.

Yours faithfully,



Councillor Clare Coghill
Leader of Waltham Forest Council