

Council Tax Changes for 2013/14

Council Tax will be changing from 1 April 2013. The Government has passed new legislation which allows Councils to make changes to their local Council Tax rules to suit local conditions. The Council Tax changes locally will affect a range of empty properties that currently benefit from exemptions or discounts. Also, you can now pay by 12 monthly instalments, and information leaflets will be found on the Council's website.

1. Discounts and Exemptions

Empty properties – 28 Days where no Tax payable

Properties which are empty and unfurnished are currently exempt from Council Tax for a period of up to six months. From 1 April 2013 the Government has abolished the exemption and the locally set discount will grant a 100 per cent discount for 28 days from the date that the property becomes both unoccupied and substantially unfurnished. From the 29th day a full Council Tax charge will begin.

Properties being structurally altered or undergoing major repairs - 50 per cent Discount

If your property is unoccupied and substantially unfurnished undergoing major works then under current arrangements an exemption from Council Tax can be claimed for up to 12 months. From 1 April 2013 the Government has abolished the exemption and the locally set discount for this type of property is 50 per cent. This new discount will still be payable for 12 months maximum (including any period of past exemption).

Second Homes – Full 100 per cent Council Tax payable

People who own a second home in the Borough are currently asked to pay 90 per cent of their Council Tax. From 1 April 2013 they will receive no discount and will have to pay the full Council Tax. Properties that are unoccupied but substantially furnished will also pay a 100 per cent Tax.

Long Term Empty Homes – 150 per cent Tax payable after two Years

Properties sometimes become empty and remain so for long periods of time. These homes can become a problem for local residents. A Council Tax charge of 100 per cent is currently charged for long term empty homes (unoccupied and substantially unfurnished) but from

1 April 2013 this rate will be increased to 150 per cent. This extra premium is designed to encourage owners of empty homes to bring them back into use.

The premium will only be applied once a home has been empty for 2 years or more. Certain properties are excluded from this premium such as annexes and Ministry of Defence properties. Please see the Council's website to see if any late changes are made in legislation to exclude more properties.

2. You Can Now Pay Over 12 Monthly Payments

The default method of payment of Council Tax for the annual demand issued in March is for 10 monthly payments, starting in April. Many taxpayers prefer this as it means they have two months when they do not have to pay.

From 1 April 2013 you can choose to pay by 12 monthly instalments. To apply for 12 instalments your application must normally be received by 15 February. However, if you wish to apply after this date please make 1st April 2013 payment as shown on your demand and we will spread the remainder over 11 instalments. If you apply later in the year the number of instalments will reduce dependant on the number of complete months left in the financial year.

If you wish to opt for this payment method please contact the Council Tax section, or you can email us on revenues@oadby-wigston.gov.uk, please use subject header 12 monthly payments.

3. Information Leaflets

The Government is keen for Councils to save money and make more use of the internet for its information and services. To save money on printing information leaflets and for postage of these leaflets, from 2013 these leaflets are available on the Council's website:

www.oadby-wigston.gov.uk/pages/council_tax

If you wish to have a printed copy of this information you can obtain copies at the Council Offices or from the Council's Staff at Oadby Library, Wigston Library or South Wigston Library. Alternatively, if you want a copy of the information posted to you free of charge contact the Council.

Any enquiry about the Council Tax or these changes please contact us Telephone **0116 288 8961 option 3**

Frequently Asked Questions

Will my discount or exemption stop on 1 April 2013?

Yes, the new rules apply from 1 April 2013. You will automatically transfer to the new rules. So if you received a Class C exemption from 1 January 2013, you will receive three months of exemption under exemption 'C' (for the period 1 January 2013 to 31 March 2013. From 1 April 2013 onwards you will be liable to the full Council Tax charge.

How can I avoid paying Council Tax for empty homes?

These changes are being introduced to get empty homes back into use. So letting out a property to tenants will mean that the tenants will be liable to pay the Council Tax.

Will everyone have to pay more Council Tax?

No, the changes planned only affect homes that are unoccupied or are treated as second homes. This means that most people will not be affected by these changes.

What happens if someone moves into an empty home?

If someone such as a tenant moves into an empty home then normally they will be expected to pay the Council Tax while they live there. However, short periods of occupation under six weeks will be ignored. In these cases the owner will be expected to carry on paying the tax.