

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

August 2021

Dear Constituent

Thank you for contacting me about council tax.

I appreciate your concerns. Many households are facing difficult financial circumstances and it is important they are supported in keeping the cost of living low. Between 1997 and 2010, council tax more than doubled which placed a significant burden on local taxpayers. I would also note that council tax has more than trebled in Wales, in the period 1997-98 to 2020-21.

Council tax is the main source of locally raised income for local authorities and helps to pay for local services. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic put significant additional pressure on local authorities last year, with local government public health officials stepping in to ensure supplies of personal protective equipment got through to care homes, provide advice to schools, carry out vital modelling work for hospitals, help redeploy staff and reconfigure teams to keep vital council services running. With this in mind, the average Band D council tax set by councils in England has increased by £81 to £1898 this year. This is a 4.4 per cent increase on the previous year. In real terms, the average council tax bill is still 1.7 per cent lower than a decade ago. I also welcome that once averaged across tiers, official data on council tax figures indicates that Conservative-controlled councils in 2021-22 will charge £93 less than Labour-controlled councils on a Band D home, and £120 less than Liberal Democrat-controlled councils.

As you will know under Labour control, Darlington experienced ever-increasing levels of council tax over 28 years. This was at a time of ever-decreasing quality of services as our arts centre closed and put our precious Crown Street library under threat, in May 2019 the people of Darlington voted for change. The new Conservative-led administration has reversed the traffic experiment, saved the library, putting it in the hands of trustees, and made sure that our town is much cleaner than it has been in a very long time.

I am glad, however, that there are limits on increases, which were first introduced by Conservative governments. This means that a referendum is required if a local authority wishes to increase council tax by 5 per cent or more. A referendum must also be held if a district council in a two-tier authority wishes to increase council tax by more than £5 or by 2 per cent or more.

Member of Parliament for Darlington

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In order to provide support for households that may need help with their council tax bills, the Government has provided an additional £670 million in grant funding to local authorities. This is expected to support more than 4 million vulnerable households.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to contact me and if I can ever be any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

Yours Sincerely
Peter Gibson

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