



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

# **The Referendums Relating to Council Tax Increases (Principles) (England) Report 2026-27**

Presented to the House of Commons pursuant to section 52ZD(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as inserted by Schedule 5 to the Localism Act 2011

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HC 1605



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# The Referendums Relating to Council Tax Increases (Principles) (England) Report 2026/27

## Legislative background

### General

1. Under section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992(a) (“the 1992 Act”) each billing authority and precepting authority must determine whether its relevant basic amount of council tax(b) for a financial year (“the year under consideration”) is excessive. In essence, the relevant basic amount of council tax for an authority is that authority’s average band D council tax but, in the case of a billing authority, excluding local precepts(c). If an authority’s relevant basic amount of council tax is excessive a referendum must be held in relation to that amount.
2. Under section 52ZC(d) of the 1992 Act the question of whether an authority’s relevant basic amount of council tax is excessive must be decided in accordance with a set of principles determined by the Secretary of State. A set of principles —
  - may contain one principle or two or more principles, and
  - must constitute or include a comparison between the authority’s relevant basic amount of council tax for the year under consideration and its relevant basic amount of council tax for the financial year immediately preceding the year under consideration(e).
3. In setting principles for the year under consideration the Secretary of State may determine categories of authority. If the Secretary of State does so the same principles must be determined for all authorities falling within the same category and if an authority does not fall within any of the categories its relevant basic amount of council tax is not capable of being excessive for the year under consideration(f).
4. If the Secretary of State does not determine categories of authority for the year under consideration, any principles determined for the year must be such that the same set is determined for all authorities(g).

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(a) 1992 c.14. Section 52ZB was inserted into the 1992 Act by Schedule 5 to the Localism Act 2011 (c.20).

(b) The term “relevant basic amount of council tax” is defined in section 52ZX of the 1992 Act (inserted as above and amended by section 41(1) and (9) to (13) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (c.2) and modified by S.I. 2017/611).

(c) A local precept may be issued to a billing authority by a local precepting authority (as defined in section 39(2) of the 1992 Act) or anticipated by a billing authority pursuant to the Billing Authorities (Anticipation of Precepts) Regulations 1992 (S.I. 1992/3239, as amended by S.I. 1995/235, S.I. 2006/3395 and S.I. 2014/35).

(d) Section 52ZC was inserted into the 1992 Act by Schedule 5 to the Localism Act 2011 and is modified by S.I. 2017/611.

(e) Section 52ZC(2) and (3) of the 1992 Act.

(f) Section 52ZC(4) of the 1992 Act.

(g) Section 52ZC(5) of the 1992 Act.

5. The principles for a financial year must be set out in a report which must be laid before and approved by the House of Commons. If the report for a financial year is not approved on or before the date on which the local government finance report for the same year is approved by the House of Commons, no principles have effect for that year and accordingly no authority's relevant basic amount of council tax is capable of being excessive for that year(a).

*The Greater London Authority*

6. The Greater London Authority ("the GLA") calculates two different basic amounts of council tax for a financial year —

- (a) an amount which applies to the City of London and which does not include any amount in respect of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, and
- (b) an amount which applies to all parts of Greater London other than the City of London and which includes an amount in respect of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime(b).

7. The GLA's relevant basic amount of council tax is defined by reference to these two amounts. In particular —

- the relevant basic amount derived from the amount mentioned in paragraph 6(a) above is referred to in the 1992 Act as the GLA's unadjusted relevant basic amount of council tax, and
- the relevant basic amount derived from the amount mentioned in paragraph 6(b) above is referred to in the 1992 Act as the GLA's adjusted relevant basic amount of council tax(c).

8. A principle that applies to the GLA, and that constitutes or includes a comparison between the GLA's relevant basic amount of council tax for the year under consideration and the financial year immediately preceding that year, may only provide for —

- a comparison between unadjusted relevant basic amounts of council tax,
- a comparison between adjusted relevant basic amounts of council tax, or
- both(d).

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(a) See generally section 52ZD of the 1992 Act, inserted as above.

(b) Sections 88(2) and 89(3) of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (c.29). Section 88(2) was substituted by section 77(1) and (3) of the Localism Act 2011 and section 89(4) (which is mentioned in section 89(3)) was substituted by section 77(1) and (7) of that Act. The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime was established by section 3 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (c.13).

(c) Section 52ZX(4) of the 1992 Act.

(d) Section 52ZC(6) of the 1992 Act.

## The Report

9. This Report is made by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and laid before the House of Commons under section 52ZD(1) of the 1992 Act.
10. The Report applies to all billing authorities, major precepting authorities falling within section 39(1)(a), (aa) and (b) to (db) of the 1992 Act, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority(**a**), the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority(**b**), the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority(**c**) and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority(**d**). No principles are specified for local precepting authorities, other mayoral combined authorities or for mayoral county combined authorities.

### Principles for the financial year beginning on 1st April 2026

11. Whilst the 2026-27 local government finance settlement covers the period 2026-27 to 2028-29, this report relates to 2026-27 only. The principles which apply for 2026-27 are set out in Annex A to this Report. If this Report is approved by resolution of the House of Commons the principles will have effect for that financial year.

Signed by authority of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government



Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

Date: 9 February 2026

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- (a) The Greater Manchester Combined Authority was created by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Order 2011 (S.I. 2011/908).
- (b) The York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority was created by the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority Order 2023 (S.I. 2023/1432).
- (c) The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority was created by the Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield Combined Authority Order 2014 (S.I. 2014/863, which was amended by S.I. 2020/806). Since 17th September 2021 the Combined Authority has been known as the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, in accordance with a resolution notified to the Secretary of State under section 97 of the Local Transport Act 2008 (c. 26), as applied to a combined authority by section 104(4) of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (c. 20).
- (d) The West Yorkshire Combined Authority was created by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Order 2014 (S.I. 2014/864, which was amended by S.I. 2021/112).

## Annex A

### **Principles for the financial year beginning on 1st April 2026**

The set of principles determined by the Secretary of State under section 52ZC(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for the financial year beginning on 1st April 2026 is as follows:

#### **Interpretation**

**1.—(1)** In this set of principles—

“2025-26” means the financial year beginning on 1st April 2025;

“2026-27” means the financial year beginning on 1st April 2026;

“the 1992 Act” means the Local Government Finance Act 1992(a);

“a fire and rescue authority” means an authority within the meaning of section 39(1)(d), (da) or (db) of the 1992 Act(b);

“the GLA” means the Greater London Authority;

“a relevant local authority” means—

(a) an authority falling within section 1(4) of the Care Act 2014(c) (other than Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, North Somerset Council, Shropshire Council, Trafford Council, Warrington Borough Council, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council and Worcestershire County Council); and

(b) the Council of the Isles of Scilly;

“a shire district council” means a district council for an area for which there is a county council;

(2) In this set of principles any reference to an authority is a reference to a billing authority, a major precepting authority falling within section 39(1)(a), (aa) and (b) to (db) of the 1992 Act, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

(3) Terms used in this set of principles which are also used in the 1992 Act have the same meanings as in that Act.

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(a) 1992 c.14.

(b) Section 39(1) was amended by the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994 (c. 19), section 35(6); the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (c. 29), sections 82 and 423 and Part 1 of Schedule 34; the Local Government Act 2003 (c. 26), section 83(1); the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (c. 21), section 53(1) and paragraph 81 of Schedule 1; the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (c. 36), section 32(1) and paragraph 10(1) and (2) of Schedule 2; the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (c. 13), section 26(1) and (2); the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 (c. 1), section 5(1); the Policing and Crime Act 2017 (c. 3), section 6 and paragraph 71(1) and (2) of Schedule 1; the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (c. 55), section 56 and paragraph 111 of Schedule 4.

(c) 2014 c.23. The definition in section 1(4) of the Act covers (a) county councils in England; (b) district councils for an area in England for which there is no county council; (c) London borough councils, and (d) the Common Council of the City of London.

## **Categories of authority for 2026-27**

**2.** For 2026-27, the Secretary of State determines that the following are categories of authority for the purposes of section 52ZC of the 1992 Act—

- (a) any relevant local authority(a),
- (b) any police and crime commissioner, other than an authority which belongs to the category mentioned in sub-paragraph (d),
- (c) the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority(b),
- (d) the police and crime commissioners for Bedfordshire, Cheshire, Durham, Gloucestershire, Humberside and Northumbria,
- (e) any shire district council,
- (f) the GLA,
- (g) any fire and rescue authority, other than the authority which belongs to the category mentioned in sub-paragraph (h),
- (h) the Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority(c),
- (i) Trafford Council, Warrington Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council,
- (j) North Somerset Council, Shropshire Council and Worcestershire County Council, and
- (k) Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council.

### **Principles for 2026-27 for authorities belonging to the category mentioned in paragraph 2(a)**

**3.** For 2026-27, the relevant basic amount of council tax of an authority which belongs to the category mentioned in paragraph 2(a) is excessive if the authority's relevant basic amount of council tax for 2026-27 is 5% (comprising 2% for expenditure on adult social care, and 3% for other expenditure), or more than 5%, greater than its relevant basic amount of council tax for 2025-26.

### **Principles for 2026-27 for authorities belonging to the category mentioned in paragraph 2(b)**

**4.** For 2026-27, the relevant basic amount of council tax of an authority which belongs to the category mentioned in paragraph 2(b) is excessive if the

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- (a) The local authorities that are within this category are set out, for information, in Annex B to this Report.
- (b) Where the mayor of a combined authority exercises PCC functions Chapter 4ZA of Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 is modified by paragraphs 7 to 10 of the Schedule to the Combined Authorities (Finance) Order 2017 (S.I. 2017/611). For the definition of "PCC functions" see section 107F(3) of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (c. 20).
- (c) The Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority was established as a corporation sole by article 3 of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire (Fire and Rescue Authority) Order 2018 (S.I. 2018/1072), which provided for the person who is for the time being the police and crime commissioner for Northamptonshire to be that fire and rescue authority. In accordance with section 1(3A) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (c. 13) that person is known as "the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire".

authority's relevant basic amount of council tax for 2026-27 is more than £15.00 greater than its relevant basic amount of council tax for 2025-26.

#### **Principles for 2026-27 for authorities belonging to the category mentioned in paragraph 2(c)**

**5.** For 2026-27, the PCC component relevant basic amount of council tax of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority(a), of the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority(b), of the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority(c) or of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority(d) is excessive if the authority's PCC component relevant basic amount of council tax for 2026-27 is more than £15.00 greater than its PCC component relevant basic amount of council tax for 2025-26.

#### **Principles for 2026-27 for authorities belonging to the category mentioned in paragraph 2(d)**

**6.** For 2026-27, the relevant basic amount of council tax of an authority which belongs to the category mentioned in paragraph 2(d) is excessive if the authority's relevant basic amount of council tax for 2026-27 is more than £18.50 greater than its relevant basic amount of council tax for 2025-26.

#### **Principles for 2026-27 for authorities belonging to the category mentioned in paragraph 2(e)**

**7.** For 2026-27, the relevant basic amount of council tax of an authority which belongs to the category mentioned in paragraph 2(e) is excessive if the authority's relevant basic amount of council tax for 2026-27 is—

- (a) 3%, or more than 3%, greater than its relevant basic amount of council tax for 2025-26, and
- (b) more than £5.00 greater than its relevant basic amount of council tax for 2025-26.

#### **Principles for 2026-27 for the GLA**

**8.** For 2026-27, the GLA's relevant basic amount of council tax is excessive if—

- (a) the GLA's unadjusted relevant basic amount of council tax for 2026-27 is more than £5.13 greater than its unadjusted relevant basic amount of council tax for 2025-26, or

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- (a) For the definition of "the PCC Component" in relation to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, see article 2 of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (Transfer of Police and Crime Commissioner Functions to the Mayor) Order 2017 (S.I. 2017/470).
- (b) For the definition of "PCC Component" in relation to the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, see article 2 of the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority Order 2023 (S.I. 2023/1432).
- (c) For the definition of "PCC Component" in relation to the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, see article 2 of the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (Election of Mayor and Transfer of Police and Crime Commissioner Functions) Order 2024 (S.I. 2024/414).
- (d) For the definition of "the PCC Component" in relation to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, see article 2 of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (Election of Mayor and Functions) Order 2021 (S.I. 2021/112).

(b) the GLA's adjusted relevant basic amount of council tax for 2026-27 is more than £20.13 greater than its adjusted relevant basic amount of council tax for 2025-26.

**Principles for 2026-27 for authorities belonging to the category mentioned in paragraph 2(g)**

**9.** For 2026-27, the relevant basic amount of council tax of an authority which belongs to the category mentioned in paragraph 2(g) is excessive if the authority's relevant basic amount of council tax for 2026-27 is more than £5.00 greater than its relevant basic amount of council tax for 2025-26.

**Principle for 2026-27 for the Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority**

**10.** For 2026-27, the relevant basic amount of council tax of the Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority is excessive if the authority's relevant basic amount of council tax for 2026-27 is more than £10.00 greater than its relevant basic amount of council tax for 2025-26.

**Principles for 2026-27 for authorities belonging to the category mentioned in paragraph 2(i)**

**11.** For 2026-27, the relevant basic amount of council tax of an authority which belongs to the category mentioned in paragraph 2(i) is excessive if the authority's relevant basic amount of council tax for 2026-27 is 7.5% (comprising 2% for expenditure on adult social care, and 5.5% for other expenditure), or more than 7.5%, greater than its relevant basic amount of council tax for 2025-26.

**Principles for 2026-27 for authorities belonging to the category mentioned in paragraph 2(j)**

**12.** For 2026-27, the relevant basic amount of council tax of an authority which belongs to the category mentioned in paragraph 2(j) is excessive if the authority's relevant basic amount of council tax for 2026-27 is 9% (comprising 2% for expenditure on adult social care, and 7% for other expenditure), or more than 9%, greater than its relevant basic amount of council tax for 2025-26.

**Principle for 2026-27 for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council.**

**13.** For 2026-27, the relevant basic amount of council tax for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council is excessive if the authority's relevant basic amount of council tax for 2026-27 is 6.75% (comprising 2% for expenditure on adult social care, and 4.75% for other expenditure), or more than 6.75%, greater than its relevant basic amount of council tax for 2025-26.



## Annex B

Local authorities for the following areas fall within the definition of “relevant local authority” as in the *Principles for the financial year beginning on 1st April 2026 (see paragraph 2(a) of Annex A)*

(INNER LONDON)

City of London  
Camden  
Greenwich  
Hackney  
Hammersmith & Fulham

Islington  
Kensington & Chelsea  
Lambeth  
Lewisham  
Southwark

Tower Hamlets  
Wandsworth  
Westminster

(OUTER LONDON)

Barking & Dagenham  
Barnet  
Bexley  
Brent  
Bromley

Croydon  
Ealing  
Enfield  
Haringey  
Harrow

Havering  
Hillingdon  
Hounslow  
Kingston-upon-Thames  
Merton

Newham  
Redbridge  
Richmond-upon-Thames  
Sutton  
Waltham Forest

(GREATER MANCHESTER)

Bolton  
Bury  
Manchester  
Oldham  
Rochdale

Salford  
Stockport  
Tameside  
Wigan

(MERSEYSIDE)

Knowsley  
Liverpool  
St Helens  
Sefton  
Wirral

(SOUTH YORKSHIRE)

Barnsley  
Doncaster  
Rotherham  
Sheffield

(TYNE AND WEAR)

Gateshead  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
North Tyneside  
South Tyneside  
Sunderland

(WEST MIDLANDS)

Birmingham  
Coventry  
Dudley  
Sandwell  
Solihull

Walsall  
Wolverhampton

(WEST YORKSHIRE)

Bradford  
Calderdale  
Kirklees  
Leeds  
Wakefield

(COUNTY COUNCILS)

Cambridgeshire  
Derbyshire  
Devon  
East Sussex  
Essex

Gloucestershire  
Hampshire  
Hertfordshire  
Kent  
Lancashire

Leicestershire  
Lincolnshire  
Norfolk  
Nottinghamshire  
Oxfordshire

Staffordshire  
Suffolk  
Surrey  
Warwickshire  
West Sussex

(UNITARY AUTHORITIES)

Bath & North East Somerset  
Bedford  
Blackburn with Darwen  
Blackpool

Bracknell Forest  
Brighton & Hove  
Bristol  
Buckinghamshire  
Central Bedfordshire

Cheshire East  
Cheshire West and Chester  
Cornwall  
Cumberland  
Darlington

Derby  
Dorset  
Durham  
East Riding of Yorkshire  
Halton

Hartlepool  
Herefordshire  
Isle of Wight  
Isles of Scilly  
Kingston-upon-Hull

Leicester  
Luton  
Medway  
Middlesbrough  
Milton Keynes  
North East Lincolnshire

North Northamptonshire  
North Lincolnshire  
Northumberland  
North Yorkshire  
Nottingham

Peterborough  
Plymouth  
Portsmouth  
Reading  
Redcar & Cleveland

Rutland  
Slough  
Somerset  
South Gloucestershire  
Southampton

Southend-on-Sea  
Stockton-on-Tees  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Swindon  
Telford & Wrekin

Thurrock  
Torbay  
West Berkshire  
West Northamptonshire  
Westmorland and Furness

Wiltshire  
Wokingham  
York