



A Message from the Leader of the Council

STEPHEN ALAMBRITIS

Dear resident,

Good news about the help you get with council tax

I know many of you will have seen stories on the news that council tax benefit for people on low incomes is being cut. I'm writing to inform you that Merton Council won't be passing this cost on to you this year.

The Government reduced the funding we get for council tax benefit by around £1.3million and told us to consult about charging some people on low incomes more in council tax. It is one of our priorities, however, to keep council tax low, so we have decided to pay the extra money ourselves out of the council budget to make sure your overall income is protected.

This will ensure that, as long as your circumstances have not changed, **you will continue to receive the same level of council tax support.** I have enclosed a letter to confirm this.

Protecting you

The reduction in our funding means people on low incomes might have had to pay council tax for the first time or might have had to pay more than previous years. Other councils are having to make people pay extra in this way.

However, due to good financial management, in Merton we have been able to protect our residents from reductions in their income. We have ensured that you don't have to pay any extra in council tax this year.

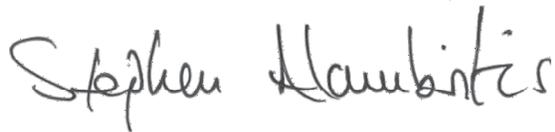
The future

Unfortunately, we can't make any promises about the future.

I'm sure some of you will have seen newspaper reports that the government may reduce council tax support further. And that is in addition to reductions in funding for other council services.

So we don't know whether we will be able to keep this level of support for you if our funding continues to be reduced.

But where we can protect you, we will. And I'm delighted that this year we are protecting people on low incomes from an increase in their council tax.



Stephen Alambritis
Leader of the Council

PS: You could be missing out on extra benefits. The council's Welfare Benefits team can help check if you could be entitled to extra money. Call 020 8545 4178 for a free appointment – we can also visit you at home if you find it difficult to get out.

Stephen Alambritis Leader of the Council

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