

# Fire service asking for £2.34 annual increase in council tax

16/01/2024



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**  
*Working together to improve community safety*

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service plans to increase its share of council tax by 2.99% from April 2024.

For a Band D property this is an annual increase of £2.34, totalling £82.26 per year or £1.58 a week.

Chair of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority Chair Councillor Edna Murphy continued: “We know the cost-of-living crisis is still impacting many local families and we don’t make decisions lightly to increase our proportion of council tax, however we sadly have little choice if we want to continue to deliver the same service we do now. We have a great track record of being an efficient and effective fire and rescue service and in our government commissioned inspection last year the Service received an Outstanding for its use of resources, something we are incredibly proud of. We will continue to review and scrutinise how the budget is spent and ensure we continue to deliver the best service we can to our communities.”

Deputy Chief Executive Matthew Warren explained: “We have saved and invested where we can year on year to balance value for money with continued investment in our services to ensure they are effective and fit for purpose now and for the future. Three per cent is the maximum we are allowed to increase our share of the council tax by this year. We have some concerns that inflation is still running above this at the moment, but we hope we can still manage to balance the budget. It does mean that we will be extremely limited as to any improvements we can make to our service that will cost money, unless we can find savings in-house, but after years of having to do this, that is becoming more and more challenging each year. We remain one of the lowest cost fire and rescue services in the country per head of population and will continue to lobby government for a better and fairer funding formula for Cambridgeshire, so we are not having to make forced cuts to our services in the future.”

The financial challenge for the Authority will come next year when Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service withdraws from the Combined Fire Control collaboration. The control room based in Huntingdon currently takes 999 calls for Cambridgeshire and Suffolk as well as mobilising fire engines and other resources. Last year Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service gave notice that they would be withdrawing from the partnership in January 2025 to set up their own control room. The collaboration currently saves each fire service over half a million pounds a year.

Chief Fire Officer Chris Strickland added: “Suffolk withdrawing from our effective partnership is potentially going to cause us a significant financial issue next year. We haven’t yet done the full cost analysis yet to understand where that leaves us, but basing it on the £500,000 we save now, it is a massive amount for money for us to suddenly have to find. We will be pleading our case to the Home Office for next year’s budget setting, but we have a lot of work to do this year to look at contingency plans for how we find that sort of money if we need to – and we can’t promise that won’t mean cuts to our operational service as we are already a very lean fire and rescue service. I also can’t say that asking more from taxpayers, if we are given permission to, won’t be an option if we want to retain the level of service we provide now. We have some tough planning and decision making to do this year.”