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News from your local Conservatives

Council Tax Special - Spring 2009



INSIDE: A message from Wandsworth Council Leader Edward Lister



INSIDE: Boris tackles City Hall waste to deliver tax freeze this year



BACK: What Wandsworth is doing to help combat the recession



BACK: David Cameron on the change our country needs

ZERO COUNCIL TAX INCREASE THIS YEAR

CONSERVATIVE COUNCIL DELIVERS VALUE FOR MONEY FOR WANDSWORTH RESIDENTS

Conservative-controlled Wandsworth is to freeze the council tax for the year ahead. With Mayor Boris Johnson also freezing his part of the tax, Wandsworth households won't pay a penny more this year.

Instead, residents will continue to pay the lowest council tax in the country, while at the same time receiving local services that the independent Audit Commission rates as the best in the UK.

The council's commitment to value for money and high-quality services has never been more important for hard-working families across the borough.

Councillor Maurice Heaster, deputy leader of Wandsworth Council, said he knew how important it is to keep people's bills down. "Recession or no recession, Wandsworth Council has delivered the lowest average taxes in the UK for the last 25 years. This year's freeze means the council tax won't have gone up in two years," he said.

"Since Labour were voted out of power in Wandsworth more than 30 years ago, we've done everything we can to keep a tight rein on spending. That's what our residents have come to expect, and what they deserve.

"With Prime Minister Gordon Brown making a shambles of things nationally, Wandsworth Conservatives are working even harder to get you a fairer deal locally."

The council tax for a Band D property in Wandsworth will be £682 for 2009/10, or £706 for Wimbledon and Putney Common Conservators. This compares to £1,235 in Labour-controlled Lambeth and £1,597 in Liberal Democrat-controlled Richmond.

Wandsworth Council has also unveiled a raft of other measures to help people weather the recession, including transferring the issue of freedom passes to local post offices and offering more flexible payment options for firms paying business rates.

Cllr Heaster added: "This year more than ever people and local businesses are looking at us and asking what we can do to help them through these difficult times. We won't let them down."



Wandsworth residents once again see no increase in council tax bills as both Boris Johnson and the local council work hard to freeze rates

LOCAL COUNCIL DELIVERS FOR SECOND YEAR RUNNING

Once again Wandsworth Council will not be asking you to pay more council tax. With local people looking to make savings in their own budgets, it is only right that the council does the same thing and does not add to the pressures households are facing.

Not only do Wandsworth residents pay at least 50% less than people in neighbouring boroughs, the local Conservative council has bucked a national trend which has seen the average council tax bill double over a decade. Wandsworth Council has continued to provide excellent services whilst delivering real value for money for local people.



FOR THE LATEST CAMPAIGN NEWS VISIT WWW.WANDSWORTHCONSERVATIVES.COM

A MESSAGE FROM THE LEADER OF WANDSWORTH COUNCIL

I'm delighted that Wandsworth has been able to freeze the council tax for the second year in a row.



In the past, our efforts to keep the tax burden down were scuppered by the Labour mayor's wasteful schemes and ever-increasing City Hall bureaucracy.

This year, as you'll see on this page, new mayor Boris Johnson has taken a leaf out of Wandsworth's book and frozen his part of the tax, too. This means our residents won't pay a penny more than they did last year.

Making sure local residents pay the lowest council tax in the UK isn't all we're doing. You'll see on the back page some of the things the council is offering to help local people and businesses weather the economic storm.

Our residents are some of the most highly skilled in the capital, but that doesn't mean we'll escape the consequences of the Labour government's financial mismanagement.

That's why we want to see local employment boosted and the borough's business community supported.

People and firms need a range of support as well as low tax. That's why we're proud to have been rated a four-star authority by the Audit Commission for the last seven years, with the quality of the public services we offer second to none.

And we're working hard to improve the borough's five unique town centres: Tooting; Putney; Balham; Clapham Junction; and Wandsworth.

Wandsworth Conservatives want our borough to keep on being the best place to live, work and relax in London. We're working hard to make this happen.

Best wishes,

Councillor Edward Lister
Leader - Wandsworth Council

MAYOR BORIS CUTS CITY HALL WASTE TO HELP LONDONERS ZERO % TAX INCREASE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN EIGHT YEARS

My first budget has been approved by the London Assembly, and I'm pleased to say that from April, Londoners will not pay a penny more in the GLA share of the council tax than they did last year. For the previous eight years, they were subjected to continuous, record increases to fund Ken Livingstone's extravagance.

No longer do hard-pressed Londoners need to spend £20,000 on lunch with South American kleptocrats. No longer must they pay £3 million to fund a Pyongyang-style freesheet, spreading the good news to the masses. Instead, this money will go towards improving local parks and trees and, crucially, putting more police on public transport.

During the budget debate, my Labour opponents claimed the last administration saved more money than mine. My question to them is this: if they saved so much, why on earth did the council tax keep going up? Where did the savings go?

Labour's attacks fluctuate somewhere between saving too much and too little. They have no coherent alternative to offer Londoners.

Instead, we are making the savings necessary to keep our share of the council tax frozen, and to protect and enhance frontline services. It delivers over 500 police officers for public transport and



secures the 24-hour Freedom Pass. My budget provides £6 million for Priority Parks, a scheme to upgrade at least 10 local parks across London and offers more affordable housing.

Underlying all this is my vision of a London which battles through the immediate economic strife, and emerges prosperous in the future. A city where the quality of life is vastly enhanced for all our citizens and in all our boroughs, where young people from every background can flourish and which remains the envy of the world.

With my best wishes to all Wandsworth residents.

BORIS JOHNSON
MAYOR OF LONDON

STANDING UP FOR LOCAL COMMUTERS

Good transport is vital to economic vitality, and so Boris Johnson and the Conservative Group on the Assembly have been hard at work since the election last May to keep London moving.

- The new East London Line extension will complete the overground railway from Clapham Junction, providing a new, direct service to the City and East London by 2012
- We've campaigned against rail overcrowding at local train stations such as Earlsfield, Clapham Junction, Wandsworth Town, Putney and Balham
- On the buses, we are making life safer for passengers by providing police Safer Transport Teams at key transport hubs such as Tooting Broadway and Clapham Junction
- We are campaigning for more convenient bus routes in Roehampton and along Trinity Road and over Wandsworth Bridge
- Planned new signalling will mean faster, more regular trains on the District and Northern Lines through Wandsworth. The District Line will have new air-conditioned trains in 2011 and Southfields station is to get a new lift



- The Freedom Pass for seniors is now valid 24/7 on buses and the tube
- We have announced the removal process for the planned Western Extension Congestion Charge
- We are working for greater growth in river transport before 2012

Not bad in less than a year, I hope you'll agree – but we'll keep working to make London's transport as efficient as possible!

RICHARD TRACEY
LONDON ASSEMBLY MEMBER

JANE DELIVERS DAVID CAMERON'S MESSAGE OF CHANGE

Jane Ellison is the Conservative Parliamentary spokesman for the Battersea, Balham and Wandsworth constituency and when the next General Election is called she'll be standing against the current Labour MP. She and her team of local volunteer helpers work all year round to deliver David Cameron's message of change.

Over the last three years Jane has campaigned on a range of issues of relevance to the quality of life of people in this area. Since the autumn of 2006 she has been working to try and keep the historic Bolingbroke hospital site, off Northcote Road, in NHS use, as well as campaigning to get local health bosses to recognise the health needs of this area's younger, working population. With colleagues right across Wandsworth Jane also campaigns for a greater police presence on our streets and against the blight of increased aircraft noise and inadequate commuter train services and stations. Last year Jane also started a practical campaign to make people in this area more aware of how to avoid becoming a victim of identity fraud.

Giving the news of the 2009 double tax freeze from Wandsworth Council and Boris Johnson a warm welcome Jane said "The best practical help you can



give people in difficult times is not to increase their bills where at all possible".

Jane lives near Clapham Junction with her partner John and her 'day job' is with the John Lewis Partnership at their head offices in Victoria, where she manages one of their customer magazines. If you want to keep in touch with Jane's campaign to be this area's next MP visit her website janeellison.net.

SHADOW SPOKESMAN PRAISES COUNCIL DOG-CHIPPING SCHEME



Photo: Jane Ellison, Cllr Martin Johnson and Shadow Spokesman Andrew Rosindell MP with canine volunteer Peggy.

Conservative Shadow Spokesman for Animal Welfare, Andrew Rosindell MP, made a fact-finding visit to Wandsworth recently to find out more about the Council's innovative dog-chipping scheme.

The council launched its compulsory microchipping scheme in January 2009. It is now a condition of all council tenancy and leasehold agreements that dog owners chip their dogs and have their details held on a borough-wide database. This will mean that the owners of stray dogs can be more easily traced. The scheme is the first of its kind and has the backing of the RSPCA and Battersea Dogs & Cats Home.

CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT SMALL SHOPS

Small shops are the heart of our high streets and town centres. They offer diversity and choice and provide a really personal service to their community. Yet they face a rising burden of regulation and tax. It is estimated that 2000 shops close every year.

To find out more about what you can do to support the campaign or to see if your business is entitled to Small Business Rate Relief visit www.conservatives.com.



NEWS IN BRIEF...

New East London Line link gets go ahead

Boris Johnson visited Clapham Junction in February to announce the go ahead for phase two of the East London Line project. This will be the final link in the chain of London's orbital Overground network and link Clapham Junction to Docklands and the City, as well as the tube network. The project is due to be completed by May 2012, in time for the Olympics.

Making plans for US Embassy in Battersea

The US embassy is to move from its existing home in Mayfair's Grosvenor Square to a site in Nine Elms breathing new life into this part of Battersea, already the focus of much redevelopment activity. An initial exhibition about the Embassy's plan was held in March and the results of a competition to decide the new building's design are due in late 2009. A planning application is expected to follow.

Maternity services at the Bolingbroke?

Local Conservatives continue to press for the Bolingbroke hospital site, off Northcote Road, to be kept in NHS use. Jane Ellison, Parliamentary Spokesman, is pressing local health officials to earmark the Bolingbroke as the ideal site for extra maternity services in the area.

Local station news

The Queenstown Road and Battersea Park station buildings are undergoing long-overdue renovation work this spring but the news from Wandsworth Town is less good with South West Trains announcing greatly reduced ticket office hours.

A major planning application for the area around Clapham Junction station is likely to be considered by Councillors in April or May.

Cleaning up Clapham Common

Although enjoyed by so many residents of this area Clapham Common is actually run by Lambeth Council. So, after receiving a spate of complaints about litter this spring, Parliamentary spokesman Jane Ellison has written to senior Lambeth Council Officers to ask them to keep the Common free of litter and well-lit.

THE CHANGE OUR COUNTRY NEEDS

Today, with the country in recession and with people worried about the future, there is an urgent need for change.

So I am determined that the modern Conservative Party provides a voice for optimism and hope.

That means doing three things.

First, understanding what has gone wrong – which means learning the lessons of Labour’s debt crisis and make sure it never happens again.

Second, showing how we would help right now – with measures to help keep people in work and in their homes; to help make sure the recession is as short, shallow and painless as possible; and to help people struggling to make ends meet.

We want to see other local authorities freeze their council tax like Wandsworth has done. And we are calling on the government to abolish income tax on savings for basic rate taxpayers in this year’s Budget.

And third, working for a positive vision of change for the future. A new Conservative government would start rebuilding our battered economy, renewing our NHS and repairing our broken society.

The European elections in June are vital. In the European Parliament, it is Conservative MEPs who are putting the case for an open, flexible Europe instead of more centralisation of power and less accountability.

Gordon Brown’s policies are not working. The longer Labour is in, the worse it gets. So today the choice facing the country is clear: a choice between the past and the future.

With your support we can make sure Britain gets the change it so desperately needs.



DAVID CAMERON MP
CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADER

WANDSWORTH COUNCIL IS DOING ITS BIT TO HELP LOCAL RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES THROUGH THE DOWNTURN

In addition to setting the lowest council tax in the country, Wandsworth has been able to freeze parking charges at last year’s level and extend direct debit facilities for those paying business rates from 10 to 12 months which will spread the payments and ease cash flow.

Grants and interest-free loans are available to small traders through the Town Centre Improvement Scheme. Wandsworth has also teamed up with Greater London Enterprise to provide free mentoring to local businesses on how to beat the recession.



The council is also investing nearly £2,000,000 to deliver Adult and Community Learning support to over 10,000 people with the aim of providing more skills and job-readiness courses to the unemployed.

Looking ahead, a Community Advice Day will be held in June 2009 to give a wide range of financial and other advice to local residents from across the borough. For more information visit wandsworth.gov.uk



TELL US WHAT YOU THINK OR LET US KNOW IF YOU CAN HELP

Let us know if you have any issues of concern:

We would like to keep in touch with you about the issues you have raised. If you would be happy for us to do this by email and mobile phone, please complete your details below:

Name

Address

Phone*

Email*

CAN YOU HELP?

Your local Conservative team is working hard. Please let us know if you can help with our work:

- I can deliver leaflets in my road
- I can display a poster at election time
- I would like a postal vote
- I would like to make a donation
- I would like to register my local support

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