

Adapting to new economic realities

The 395p rate set by the Council for the 2013-2014 financial year reflects continuing economic uncertainty and increased budgetary demands.

The budget approved by the Council on January 24th this year was a balanced, realistic response to grave new economic realities and mounting pressures on the Council's finances. Chief among these financial demands are the escalating gate fee charges being imposed on local authorities by the Department of Infrastructure following its decision to withdraw its £5.7 million annual waste subsidy.

The Council has had to estimate its financial requirements against a background of uncertainty as government will, undoubtedly, continue to introduce other measures to help balance its finances. These are measures likely to lead to increased rateborne charges in the future; in particular, outcomes from the government's agenda for change that is looking at alternative means of service delivery.

The Council cannot tell what the future holds, so must budget as prudently as it can.

The Council remains committed, however, to two guiding tasks; to deliver a quality value for money service to its ratepayers and to continue investing in the regeneration of Douglas town centre.

This Council, which saw eight new members elected in 2012, has the vision and flexibility to further those objectives, guided and supported by its Constitution.

Adopted in May 2012 the Constitution is founded on transparency and accountability and, with its radical new advisory committee structure, governs every decision-making procedure and drove the process for the setting of this year's borough rate.

This newsletter comes to you at a time when government is considering the future shape and scope of central and local government.

The debate surrounding this crucial issue will be exercising the hearts and minds of policy makers for some time to come. In the meantime, while the Council recognises the need for local government reform, it remains firmly of the opinion that local authorities, not central government, are better equipped to make the decisions that affect ratepayers and the wider community.



*Councillor David Christian, JP
Leader, Douglas Borough Council*

These are difficult times but the Council remains determined to restructure its budgets in a fair and responsible way, embrace technology, consolidate and maintain its assets, increase its housing stock, raise environmental standards and invest in town centre regeneration.

A prudent fiscal strategy has led to the Council identifying savings of £371,330 for the coming financial year when it will also be investing in capital schemes valued at £24.34 million. Importantly, to fund some of these capital schemes, the Council will be using its reserves wisely to save loan charges and reduce the rate burden.

Douglas is not a standstill local authority. It is a leading, forward-thinking local authority, open to challenge and change, equipped to respond with determination to the scale of the harsh new economic realities it faces.

The Council is determined and ambitious and has the vision, skills and experience to work with its partners in government and the private sector to create a business and visitor-friendly environment that will secure the long-term economic, social and cultural future wellbeing for Douglas.

Councillor David Christian, JP
Leader, Douglas Borough Council

Challenges and opportunities

The challenges the Council faces may be many but those same challenges also present opportunities.

Waste management

The Department of Infrastructure's withdrawal from local authorities of its £5.7 million annual waste disposal subsidy will be phased in over five years with effect from April 1st 2013.

This measure will see a 64 per cent increase in gate fee charges levied on domestic and commercial waste disposal from April 1st this year. For the coming financial year this has added £297,000 to the existing £467,000 as an impact on the rateborne budget, while the annual increases to be levied by the Department of Infrastructure over the next five years will reach a total rateborne cost of at least £2,147,660 for the 2018-2019 financial year. This amounts to an alarming 360 per cent increase, on top of which are indexation increases to meet the operator's future inflation costs.

The Council is therefore reviewing its waste management operation and, as part of the process, is considering relocating its recycling operation to its Ballacottier service centre.

Additionally the Council has not ruled out installing microchips in domestic wheeled waste bins at some time in the future, a practice already adopted by some local authorities in the UK. This is a measure that could serve as a 'pay as you throw' measure and encourage more households to recycle, while also acknowledging that a person living on their own should not have to pay the same as, for example, a family of five.

Reduce, reuse, recycle

There is now an even more urgent need to 'reduce, reuse, recycle' and for as many households as possible to sign up for the kerbside collection of recyclables service the Council operates in partnership with Braddan Commissioners.

The more the service is used, the less waste the Council will have to transport to the Energy from Waste facility and the less onerous the rate burden need be.

For details about the service call 696450 or visit the Council's website, douglas.gov.im, and follow the Recycle for Mann link.

Housing

'Authority for authorities: The Council is of the view that the current structure of local authorities does not offer the autonomy or the flexibility needed to ensure public money is spent on what matters in their towns and villages.'

Council Leader Councillor David Christian JP

Douglas is the largest housing authority in the Island with 2,315 properties valued at around £227 million. The government's recent housing review raises questions about the future of the island's housing authorities, their scope and power.

For its part Douglas Borough Council has reviewed and strengthened its housing service and is well placed not only to set its own rent levels, but also to maintain and manage its housing stock without the need for deficiency funding, were it given greater autonomy.



Lower Pulrose completed

In 2012 the redevelopment of Lower Pulrose was completed. This £30 million project, begun 10 years ago, saw 252 properties replaced by 243 new dwellings and 28 first-time buyer homes.

Progress at Upper Pulrose

The £17.6 million redevelopment of Upper Pulrose continued during 2012 with the completion of the first phase, 44 properties in Heather Crescent and in Heather and Hazel Close, at a cost of £6 million.

The second phase, due for completion towards the end of 2013, will see the construction of 17 three-bedroom, six two-bedroom and two four-bedroom houses, along with 14 two-bedroom apartments. This will be followed by the third phase, the construction of 38 sheltered housing units in June this year. Completion of the redevelopment is anticipated in 2015.



Additionally, existing Upper Pulrose outer ring properties will be refurbished, with the conversion of some of the three-bedroom houses into two-bedroom houses with the bathroom relocated upstairs and refurbishment of the ground floor accommodation to provide a kitchen/diner. This project is due to begin in April this year.

Willaston

Some tenants in Willaston are experiencing damp in their homes that arose after their properties had been fully treated with cavity wall insulation.

The Council recognises this is an unacceptable situation and is now progressing a capital-funded project to carry out a pilot scheme on six properties most adversely affected by damp. Once the scheme is completed an assessment will be made to determine the most cost-effective solution to eradicate the problem permanently.

A brighter future for Douglas

During the 2012-2013 financial year the Council invested £456,000 in public street lighting schemes. This included replacing 71 lighting columns, painting and maintaining a further 258 columns and installing eight LED lanterns along the Saddle Road footpath.

Additionally new decorative lighting was installed in Summerhill Glen at a cost of £51,000.

For the coming financial year the Council will be investing a further £351,000. This will see lighting renewal schemes for Peel Road between the Brown Bobby and Quarterbridge in conjunction with the Department of Infrastructure's reconstruction of the highway and some 12 other areas upgraded across the Borough. There will also be a second phase of decorative lighting for Summerhill Glen and new feature lighting installed on Douglas promenade.

Investing to save

The Council is making prudent use of its reserves to fund capital schemes and so reduce the burden on the rate payer.

Reserve-funded capital schemes budgeted for 2013-2014 include:

- £521,720 for upgrading the crematorium;
- £210,290 first-year loan costs for the Lower Douglas regeneration project at Cambrian Place;
- £150,000 refurbishment of Hutchinson Square;
- £80,000 installation of a ground source heating system for Ballaughton nurseries' greenhouses and associated buildings, leading to an estimated £30,000 p.a. savings in fuel bills.

Environmental quality

'Let me make it quite clear. The Council will be relentless in its pursuit of offenders, hitting them where it hurts most, in the pocket.'

Council Leader Councillor David Christian JP

The Council is committed to improving the town's overall quality of life. It continues to work to rid the town of the blight of litter - much of it smoking related - and to combat dog fouling.

Through the borough warden service the Council is stepping up action against those who infringe the town's byelaws, in particular those relating to littering and dog fouling

19 litter 'hot spots' have been identified around the town, 10 in high-profile locations which are being targeted and monitored by the borough wardens who have been instructed to issue £50 fixed penalty notices to all byelaws offenders.

The Council is also strengthening its enforcement action against owners of derelict properties for, as Councillor Christian has said: 'Unsightly derelict properties act as deterrents to new investment and enterprise'.

The Big Tidy Up

This Council-led anti-litter island-wide campaign held in September 2012 attracted more than 900 volunteers who collected more than 1.9 tonnes of litter. The 2013 Big Tidy Up will take place over the weekend beginning Friday September 27th.

Further details will be issued nearer the date.



Regeneration

'Regeneration is not merely about looking good, it is about sending out a positive "open for business" message. Local businesses, wherever possible, must rise to the challenge and try to combat the threat that internet shopping poses by providing a good selection of goods at competitive prices, while we, as consumers, need to think before we shop, and support local.'

Council Leader Councillor David Christian JP

The Council's financial support of town centre regeneration is working towards a better Douglas, a town that can attract new business and new enterprise, make creative use of its public spaces and offer a vibrant setting for social interaction and an improved retailing environment.

During 2012 the town centre regeneration scheme saw upper and lower Nelson Street and Wellington Street completed. This year work will start on the northern section of Duke Street between Victoria Street to Strand Street, along with Regent Street and Drumgold Street. The project is expected to be completed by the middle of November and will incorporate tree planting, sculptural seating and a designated performance area in Regent Street.

The next phase, Strand Street, is scheduled to start in January 2014.



Lower Douglas regeneration project at Cambrian Place

'The Council's investment in this capital project is a vote of confidence in the future and demonstrates a commitment to create a town in which new investors will want to set up, finance and grow their businesses.'

Council Leader Councillor David Christian JP

The Lower Douglas regeneration project at Cambrian Place, first proposed in December 2011, is still awaiting final government approval. For the Council's part, once those approvals are in place, it is ready to purchase the site. For the 2013-2014 financial year this will not place any additional burden on the rates, as the development loan costs of £210,290 are being funded entirely from reserves.

Purchase of the site will signal the start of a development that will begin the long-awaited and much needed regeneration of lower Douglas.

The Cambrian Place project is more than just replacing a library and building a car park. It is about providing the infrastructure and setting the tone for other developments in the area to follow, to boost enterprise and investment and edge towards a Douglas fit for the 21st century.



Connecting with our customers

The Council has a new website

www.douglas.gov.im

Designed and developed largely in house by the Council's ICT team to contain costs it offers greater self-service functionality and also brings together news and information about the town.

Douglas | You, Your Councillor and LPA offers like this. Search

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This site is currently in Beta testing, please provide feedback HERE. The current live site is www.douglas.gov.im.

Repair and Maintenance

What Can I Do Online?

- Download Alterations Form
- Download Tenant Handbook (R)
- Download Customer Survey
- Contact the housing section

Related Services

- Tenant information
- Moving house
- Sheltered accommodation
- Housing applications

Contact Details

- Council housing office 01624 696435
- Planning advice (Gov) 01624 696950

Emergencies Where a vital service has broken down and is likely to cause risk to you, your home or your belongings. This will be made safe within 24 hours or reporting.

Urgent repairs Those that can wait without causing major inconvenience. We aim to have these done no later than seven calendar days after they are reported.

Routine repairs Those that can wait without causing inconvenience to the tenant. We aim to have these done within one calendar month.

Emergency repair examples	Urgent repair examples	Routine repair examples
Total loss of water supply	Overflows and taps continuously running	Boundary walls
Major water leak which is causing a flood	Blocked sink, bath or basin	Heating replacements
Toilet blockage or toilet not flushing where there is no alternative toilet	Toilet blockage where there is another W/C in the dwelling	Leaking radiators
Blocked flue to a boiler or open fire	Broken sanitary fittings when they can no longer be used	Window and roof repairs where they are not leaking
Total loss of electric power	Extractor fan in kitchen or bathroom not working	

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Claus for Celebration

Santa train service starts December 15th. Meet Santa and his little helpers and wish 'em Christmas in his proto...

Christmas and New Year 2012-2013 services

- An opportunity to hear voices at the library
- Snow making at Christmas in Douglas
- Summerhill Glen lights up for Christmas
- Winterfest Celebrations

Explore

- About Douglas Borough Council
- Find out more about recycling
- Where are the car parks in Douglas?
- Have you visited our gens recently?
- Join the library
- Meet your councillor
- Find out more about social housing
- Meet the Borough Wardens

What's Coming Up?

- Christmas Emporium Castle Street, Douglas
- Summerhill Glen lights up for Christmas Summerhill Glen
- Monthly readers group Henry Bloom Book Library
- Christmas in Plenty and Prose Henry Bloom Book Library, Victoria Street, Douglas
- 2012 Santa train Departs Strathallan Terminus.

Popular

- Jobs with the Council
- Search renew and reserve books online
- Subscribe to recycle reminders
- Play your rates online
- Buy a Santa Tram Ticket
- Town centre regeneration
- Council Facebook page
- 'Go Digital' with eBook downloads
- Leave website feedback

News

Council News

- 04-12-2012 Civic reception for Special Olympics Life of Man
- 04-12-2012 Christmas and New Year 2012-2013 services
- 04-11-2012 Independent member appointed to Standards Committee
- 28-11-2012 Civic reception for launch of Life at Home scheme

Library News

- 04-12-2012 Alex talks the walk at the library
- 20-11-2012 An opportunity to hear voices at the library
- 01-11-2012 'Fighting the final' to October at the library
- 21-09-2012 Coast to coast walk with the library

Recycle Information

What can you recycle? When is your recycling round collected?

To find out more about recycling, visit our Recycle for Mann website.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Leisure

- Douglas golf course
- Roller's Park
- Gleens
- Playgrounds
- Hansa Tennis
- Skate Park
- BMX Track
- Promenade

The Council

- Electoral year
- Councillor
- Council Meetings
- Jobs with the Council

Holidays

- School Holidays
- Public Holidays

Planning and Environment

- Building Control
- Systems
- Recycling
- Waste Management

Housing

- Tenant Information
- Apply for a house
- Moving House
- Sheltered Accommodation

News and Events

- Council News
- Library News
- Events

Parking, Rubbish and Streets

- Car Parks
- Civic Amenity Site
- Recycle
- Through Warden
- Rubbish

Library

- ISBN Library
- e-Books Service
- Search, renew and reserve online

Rates and Money

- The Dogger
- Make a payment

General Enquiries: Team Help, Refuse, Street Douglas, Help Plan, 955 1521

For additional contact details, please click here

Team help opening hours: Mon to Fri 9am to 5:30pm, Sat 10am, emergency number: 01624 671966

Find us on: Site Map, Privacy Policy, Declaration, Contact Us, A-Z Index

'Like' the Council

The Council has also raised its social media profile and its Facebook page is attracting more than 2100 followers.

Find us on Facebook

How the rate has changed

	£ (000)	Rate (Pence)	Increase (%)
Last Year's Rate	10,225	387.0	
Increase in Rateable Value		-0.9	-0.2
Inflation for the year (excluding waste levy increase)	36	1.4	0.4
Sub total	10,261	387.5	0.2
Government imposed change			
Decrease in domestic waste subsidy	297	11.2	2.9
Removal of Drainage Agency	84	3.2	0.8
Other changes affecting the rate			
Improvements to Public Lighting	30	1.1	0.3
Shaw's Brow car park operations	33	1.2	0.3
Ballaughton Nurseries improvement works	17	0.7	0.2
Increased enforcement of derelict building regulations	8	0.3	0.1
Staffing & service efficiencies	-162	-6.2	-1.6
Reduction in Civic Amenity Site costs	-49	-1.8	-0.5
Maintenance & procurement savings	-35	-1.4	-0.4
Contribution from reserves	-13	-0.5	-0.1
Miscellaneous savings	-11	-0.3	-0.1
This Year's Rate	10,460	395.0	2.1

Rate implications of costs recently transferred from Government (to 2013)

	£ (000)	Rate (Pence)	Increase (%)
Waste levy	902	34.1	8.6
Litter bin function	160	6.1	1.5
Street Cleaning Agency	150	5.7	1.4
Douglas Development Partnership projects	20	0.8	0.2
Increase in housing administration allowance	-57	-2.2	-0.6
Total cost and rate effect:	1,175	44.5	11.1

The full budget is viewable at the Borough Library in Victoria Street.

For more financial information regarding the Borough, please visit our website at www.douglas.gov.im

Your rates demand For most householders

Enclosed with this newsletter is your rates demand. Rates paid in full by 4pm on 28th June 2013 will attract a five per cent discount.

Payment options:

Direct debit: (application form enclosed)

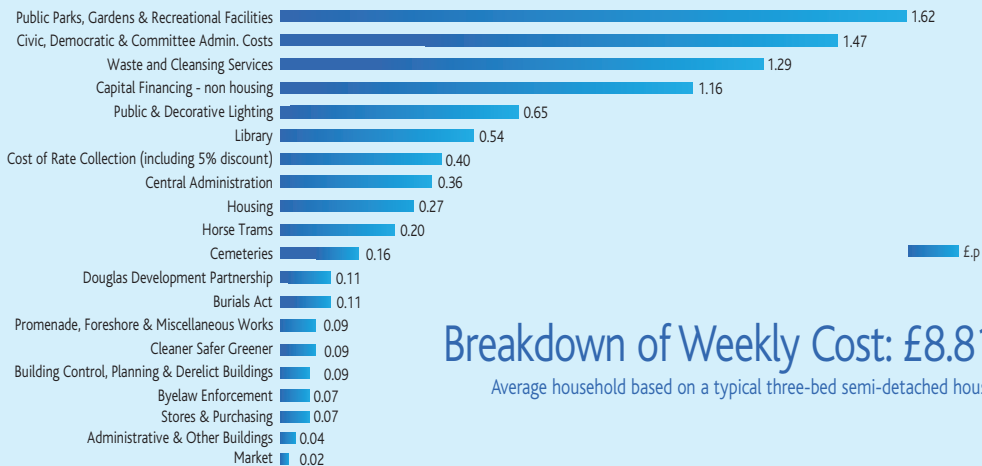
Debit card:

- By telephone, **696344** (Ensure you have your rate demand to hand);
- In person at the Borough Treasurer's counter in the Town Hall (Please provide your payment counterfoil);
- Online at www.douglas.gov.im

Cheque: Please make payable to Douglas Borough Council and attach payment counterfoil. Post-dated cheques are not accepted.

Cash: In person at the Borough Treasurer's counter in the Town Hall. Please provide your payment counterfoil. Cash should not be sent through the post.

Credit card rates payments cannot be accepted.



Breakdown of Weekly Cost: £8.81

Average household based on a typical three-bed semi-detached house

Useful Numbers

General Enquiries 696300

Out of Hours emergencies

(all services) 671100

Borough Cemetery 696329

Building Control 696375

Douglas Golf Course 661558

Eastern Civic Amenity Site 678217

Street and decorative lighting 696385

Enforcement (Byelaws) 696326

Henry Bloom Noble Library 696461

Housing enquiries 696435

Human Resources 696455

Waste/Street Cleaning 696445

Parks 696330

Rates enquiries 696355

Tramways 696420

Douglas Borough Council, Town Hall, Ridgeway Street, Douglas, Isle of Man IM99 1AD

Tel: 696300

For Councillors' contact details please refer to the Council's website: www.douglas.gov.im and to the 2013 Telephone Directory