

Local Council Tax Support Consultation 2016/17

Introduction

The Local Government Finance Act 2012 sets out that Billing Authorities have to hold a public consultation on any potential changes to their existing Local Council Tax Support scheme. To comply with this and to seek public opinion on the scheme a 6 week consultation took place between 17th August and 28th September 2015.

Various media channels were used to promote the consultation. A draft policy document was also published for open review. Key organisations were also invited to respond including major precepting authorities.

There were a total of 123 respondents. However this did not relate to 123 fully completed questionnaires as they were a high level of respondents that did not fully complete the questionnaire, this was through abandoning the completion of the questionnaire at different points.

Overview

The questionnaire was divided into the following sections:

- Paying for the Scheme

Within this section the views were sought on the fundamental basis of how the scheme was to be funded. It indicated that if levels of entitlement were to be maintained or enhanced further fiscal choices would have to be made.

- Options for making changes to the existing scheme

Within this section views were sought on specific changes proposed. It was explained that these changes would assist the scheme to remain broadly self-funding and that the specific changes could decrease the level of support for some residents.

- Any other comments

Free text sections allowing wider comment to be provided.

- About yourself

Equality and Diversity responses.

Rounding has been applied to results.

Responses

- 1 I have reviewed the background information about the Local Council Tax Support scheme

		Response Total	Response Percent
Yes		31	77.5%
No		9	22.5%

Paying for the scheme

- 2 The basis of the current Local Council Tax Support scheme is broadly self-funding. This means it broadly costs the same as the amount of Government grant Colchester Borough Council receives. Do you agree that Colchester Borough Council should continue a scheme, which is, broadly, self-funding?

		Response Total	Response Percent
Yes		13	68%
No		3	16%
Don't know		3	16%

- 3 If Colchester Borough Council does not continue with a self-funding scheme and still provides the current level of support, or an enhanced level of support, it will need to find additional funding from other sources. Do you think we should adopt any of the following options to help fund the scheme?




Please select one answer for each source of funding

	Yes	No	Don't know	Response Total
Increase the level of Council Tax	21.05% (4)	57.90% (11)	21.05% (4)	19
Use the Council's reserves	21.05% (4)	57.90% (11)	21.05% (4)	19
Reduce the funding available for other Council Services	5.26% (1)	73.69% (14)	21.05% (4)	19






- 4 If Colchester Borough Council were to partly or fully fund the scheme, using other sources of income, what would be your preference? Please rank in order of preference (1, 2, or 3), where 1 is the option you most prefer and 3 being the least preferred option

	1	2	3	Response Total
Increase the level of Council Tax	31.58% (6)	21.05% (4)	47.37% (9)	19
Use the Council's reserves	31.58% (6)	52.63% (10)	15.79% (3)	19
Reduce the funding available for other Council Services	21.05% (4)	26.32% (5)	52.63% (10)	19

- 5 Do you agree with the principle of every working age resident, in receipt of Local Council Tax support, having to make a minimum payment toward their Council Tax costs?**

		Response Total	Response Percent
Yes		10	53%
No		5	26%
Not sure		4	21%

- 6 Currently working age residents in receipt of Local Council Tax Support have to pay at least 20% of their Council Tax charge each year. If this was kept at 20% would you:**

		Response Total	Response Percent
Strongly Agree		4	21%
Agree		3	16%
Neither agree or disagree		4	21%
Disagree		6	32%
Strongly Disagree		2	11%

- 7 Please use the space below to make any other comments you may have about how Colchester Borough Council should fund the Local Council Tax Support scheme:**

(3 responses - verbatim)

- *Inrease it*
- *I agree it should be kept at 20% but I feel this was unfair to start with when it was originally bought in. How do you expect someone to pay any of it on next to no income? There should be a threshold where it starts, you cant expect someone with no income to pay 20%.*
- *With the benefits squeeze from central government due to further constrict there can be no justification for CBC adding to the burden of those affected.*

Options for making changes to the existing Local Council Tax Support scheme






Colchester Borough Council could potentially make changes to the existing Local Council Tax Support scheme, which, if implemented, would assist the scheme to continue to be broadly self-funding.

The changes, if implemented, could decrease the level of support to some People depending on their circumstances. Colchester Borough Council has not made any final decisions at this stage.

- 8 For those of working age claiming Local Council Tax Support a deduction may be made for other adults living with them. This is called a non-dependant deduction. A non-dependant deduction is broadly made for any adult over the age of 18 who is not the claimant's partner or who is not living with the claimant on a commercial basis; this can include an adult son or daughter. The level of deduction is currently £11 per week.

Colchester Borough Council could potentially change the level of non-dependant deduction to £12 per week. If non dependant deductions were increased to £12 per week would you:

(Report note - Modelling indicates this would reduce scheme provision by £9,303)

		Response Total	Response Percent
Strongly Agree		5	29%
Agree		5	29%
Neither agree or disagree		2	12%
Disagree		2	12%
Strongly Disagree		3	18%






- 9 Colchester Borough Council could potentially change how we assess working age residents that are self-employed and claiming Local Council Tax Support. We could introduce a minimum earned income figure for those who are self-employed which is in line with the United Kingdom minimum wage for 16 hours worked.

Where a working age resident is in self-employment and continues to run a business where their income is below the minimum level, they will be assumed to earn at least minimum wage based on a 16 hour week.

This minimum would not apply for a designated start-up period of one year in order to allow a period to establish a business.






If a Minimum Income level for the self-employed were introduced would you:

(Report note - Modelling indicates this would reduce scheme provision by £148,278)

		Response Total	Response Percent
Strongly Agree		7	44%
Agree		2	12%
Neither agree or disagree		4	25%
Disagree		2	12%
Strongly Disagree		1	6%

- 10 Currently, entitlement to Local Council Tax Support can be backdated to a maximum of three months based on the presence of ‘good cause’. Colchester Borough Council could potentially reduce the amount of backdating from three months to four weeks. This would only apply to working age applicants. If backdating was limited to a period of four weeks would you:**

(Report note - Modelling indicates limiting backdating of a working age Local Council Tax Support applications to four weeks would reduce scheme provision by £17,500)

		Response Total	Response Percent
Strongly Agree		4	25%
Agree		2	12%
Neither agree or disagree		2	12%
Disagree		4	25%
Strongly Disagree		4	25%

Any other comments

- 11 Please use the space below to make any other comments you have about the Colchester Borough Council’s options 1 to 3:**

(3 responses - verbatim)

- Option 3 is the least of a bad bunch.
- Increasing the non-dep deduction from 11 to £12 is ridiculous, will not save you any money and is pointless
- I believe the option of increasing the non-dependent deductions seems fair and reasonable. I think it would be unfair to penalise the self employed when they might be struggling to make a new business enterprise succeed.

- 12 Please use the space below if you would like Colchester Borough Council to consider other options**

(2 responses - verbatim)

- I'm all for those earning a certain level paying 20% but there needs to be a exception when income is way too low.

- Be honest. Explain that central government funding is being cut and find the shortfall through raising council tax, not hitting the poor harder.

13 Please use the space below if you have any further comments to make regarding the Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2016/2017

(1 response - verbatim)

- Redesign your calculation sheets you send out, I cant believe the amount of paper wasted when it has just 1 line printed on it. I had a pile of paper of 20 pages & 1/2 was just 1 line on it. Reducing the amount of paper would save the dept loads on paper & postage.

Equality and Diversity Questions

Are you currently claiming Local Council Tax Support?

		Response Total	Response Percent
Yes		3	27%
No		7	64%
Not sure		1	9%

Are you

		Response Total	Response Percent
Male		5	45%
Female		3	27%
Prefer not to say		2	18%
Other, please specify		1	9%

Age

		Response Total	Response Percent
20 or under		0	0%
20 - 39		1	10%
40 - 59		6	60%
60 - 79		0	0%
80+		0	0%
Prefer not to say		3	30%

Ethnicity

		Response Total	Response Percent
White British		7	58%
White Irish		0	0%
White Other		0	0%
Gypsy / Roma		0	0%
Traveller of Irish Heritage		0	0%
Black or Black British African		0	0%

Black or Black British Caribbean		0	0%
Mixed White/Black African		0	0%
Mixed White/Black Caribbean		0	0%
Black Other		1	8%
Asian or Asian British Pakistani		0	0%
Asian or Asian British Indian		0	0%
Asian or Asian British Other		0	0%
Mixed White/Asian		0	0%
Asian Other		0	0%
Chinese		0	0%
Mixed Other		1	8%
Not Known		0	0%
Prefer not to say		3	25%
Other, please specify		0	0%

Do you consider yourself to have a physical impairment?

		Response Total	Response Percent
Yes		1	9%
No		10	91%

Do you consider yourself to have a sensory impairment?

		Response Total	Response Percent
Yes		0	0%
No		10	100%

Do you consider yourself to have a learning difficulty or disability?

		Response Total	Response Percent
Yes		0	0%
No		10	100%

Do you consider yourself to have any mental health needs?

		Response Total	Response Percent
Yes		1	10%
No		9	90%