

10 November 2016 at 7.00 pm


Conference Room, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks  
Despatched: 02.11.16

# Cabinet


## Membership:


Chairman, Cllr. Fleming; Vice-Chairman, Cllr. Lowe  
Cllrs. Dickins, Firth, Hogarth, Piper and Searles


## Agenda


	Pages	Contact
Apologies for Absence		
1. <b>Minutes</b> To agree the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 October 2016, as a correct record.	(Pages 1 - 4)	
2. <b>Declarations of interest</b> Any interests not already registered.		
3. <b>Questions from Members (maximum 15 minutes)</b>		
4. <b>Matters referred from Council, Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committee or Cabinet Advisory Committees</b>		
a) Minute reference from Audit Committee - 27 September 2016	(Pages 5 - 8)	
5. <b>Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2017/18</b> 	(Pages 9 - 82)	Nick Scott, Adrian Rowbotham Tel: 01732 227397/7153

## REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEES

6. <b>Environmental Health Partnership - Charging For Food Hygiene Re-Rating Inspections</b> 	(Pages 83 - 88)	Annie Sargent Tel: 01322343085
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- |    |   |                      |                                    |
|----|---|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 7. | <b>Annual Review of Parking Charges 2017 - 18</b>                                 | (Pages 89 -<br>102)  | John Strachan<br>Tel: 01732227310  |
| 8. | <b>Christmas Parking 2016</b>   | (Pages 103 -<br>108) | John Strachan<br>Tel: 01732227310  |
|    |  |                      |                                    |
| 9. | <b>Public Health (Preventative Services)<br/>Devolution<br/>To follow</b>         |                      | Lesley Bowles<br>Tel: 01732 227335 |

 Indicates a Key Decision

 indicates a matter to be referred to Council

#### EXEMPT INFORMATION

At the time of preparing this agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public.

If you wish to obtain further factual information on any of the agenda items listed above, please contact the named officer prior to the day of the meeting.

Should you need this agenda or any of the reports in a different format, or have any other queries concerning this agenda or the meeting please contact Democratic Services on 01732 227000 or [democratic.services@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@sevenoaks.gov.uk).

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2016 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Lowe (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Dickins, Firth, Hogarth and Searles

An apology for absence was received from Cllr. Piper

Cllrs. Edwards-Winsler, Hunter, Pett and Purves were also present.

31. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 15 September 2016, be approved and signed as a correct record.

32. Declarations of interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

33. Questions from Members

Councillors Edwards-Winsler and Purves indicated that they would be asking questions during discussion of minutes 35 and 36 below.

34. Matters referred from Council, Audit Committee, Scrutiny Committee or Cabinet Advisory Committees

There were none.

35. Community Sponsorship Programme - Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS)

The Chairman presented the report on the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.

The Housing & Health Advisory Committee had considered the same report and agreed to recommend it to Cabinet.

In response to questions from Councillor Purves, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman set out that the Council's position on the SVPRS was developed with a mind to conditions prevailing in the local housing market.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That Officers work on and implement a process to consider applications from potential Community Sponsors so that the Council can assess whether it should consent the approval of the applicant to operate as a community sponsor in this District.

36. Development of Buckhurst 2 car park

The Chairman and Portfolio Holder for Policy & Performance presented the report which sought approval to develop the existing Buckhurst 2 car park to provide additional town centre parking capacity and residential accommodation.

He set out that there was a proven shortage of long stay parking in Sevenoaks Town Centre and that it was very important for parking provision to be addressed so as to ensure the Town's viability. He further set out that consideration needed to be given to appropriate funding models.

The Policy & Performance Advisory Committee had considered the same report and had agreed to recommend it to Cabinet.

Funding scenarios were provided to Cabinet and it was set out that the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee had decided to recommend scenario C, being the funding of the scheme by potential net income from the housing scheme and a loan from the Public Works Loans Board. The scenario assumed that all off-street parking charges were increased by 3.5% for five years.

In response to a question from Councillor Purves the Chairman set out that Kent County Council Highways would only comment on a live planning application but that earlier Highways concerns about the previous application were dealt with in 2014.

In response to Councillor Edwards-Winsor the Chairman and Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services set out that if possible the wording 'best value for money' would replace the words 'most economically advantageous tender' when the matter was reported to Council. In response to another question the Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services explained the number of floors to be erected on the car park.

Councillor Edwards-Winsor further asked about the section 106 and CIL contributions and the Chief Finance Officer explained that the total contributions under both regimes came to £600,000. It was further explained that as none of the houses constructed as part of the scheme were likely to fall within the definition of affordable there was provision for off-site affordable housing.

Cabinet - 13 October 2016

In response to another question from Councillor Edwards-Winsor the Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the Public Works Loans Board rate of interest would be fixed for the loan period and that the current rate was 2.24%. The Chairman also confirmed that off-site provision would be made for the displaced parking.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Council that

- a) a planning application be submitted to provide additional long stay parking at the Buckhurst 2 Car Park, Sevenoaks;
- b) the planning application includes provision for residential accommodation to partly offset the costs of the proposed car park;
- c) the preferred funding method be scenario C as detailed within the report.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.24 PM

CHAIRMAN

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS

This notice was published on 17 October 2016. The decision contained in Minute 35 takes effect on 25 October 2016. The decision contained in Minute 36 is a recommendation to Council.

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**Item 4 - Audit Committee minutes of meeting 27 September 2016**

Cabinet are asked to note the [Audit Committee](#) minute extracts below:

**21. Statement of Accounts 2015/16**

The Committee welcomed Sarah Ironmonger, the Engagement Lead and Geoffrey Bannister, the Audit Manager from the Council's External Auditors, Grant Thornton to the meeting.

The Head of Finance presented a report on the Statement of Accounts 2015/16 and the representatives of Grant Thornton explained their findings on the Statement of Accounts, which were to be signed off by 30 September 2016. The accounts gave a true and fair view of the Council's position and had been properly prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice. No adjustments were found that affected the Council's reported financial position and no changes were required to the major statements. Grant Thornton hoped to sign off the Accounts with an unqualified audit opinion. An unqualified opinion had been given on the Council's Value for Money arrangements, confirming that the Council had proper arrangements in place.

Sarah Ironmonger highlighted that from 2017/18 all Councils would be required to publish their audited financial statements by 31 July and so significant progress would be needed to deliver the same volume of work in a more intense shorter period. There had been a significant improvement in the quality of the financial statements when compared to the previous year, resulting in fewer adjustments to the notes. Three issues had been raised in relation to internal controls. Minor disclosure issues had been raised which did not change the final reported financial position. She advised that Grant Thornton had been supported very positively by the Council throughout the process.

The Committee was also asked to agree that the Chairman of the Audit Committee sign a representation letter to Grant Thornton for the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2016 to confirm that the financial statements gave a true and fair view.

The Chairman noted the audited pension fund liability of £62 million, which was significantly different from the last actuarial assessment of £25 million. However this deficit was not considered an area of concern. The two figures were calculated in different ways and the Council was meeting its liabilities as they came due. Sarah Ironmonger explained that the audited figure was based on the immediate closure of the fund and did not take account of returns from the fund. The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the Finance Advisory Committee was due to consider the matter after the triennial revaluation.

## Agenda Item 4

The Committee thanked the Head of Finance and her Team for their immense hard work in preparing the accounts and to Grant Thornton for carrying out the audit.

### Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That

- a) the Statements of Accounts for 2015/16 be approved;
- b) the audit letter of representation be approved and signed by the Chairman; and
- c) **Cabinet be advised of the significant variation between the audited and actuarial assessments of the pension fund liabilities.**

### 22. Internal Audit 2016/17 - 1st Progress Report

The Committee expressed disappointment that the Audit, Risk & Anti-Fraud Manager had been unable to attend the last 3 Audit Committee meetings and Internal Audit was not represented at the meeting. Members agreed that this could hamper their work and that Cabinet's attention be brought to this.

The Chief Finance Officer presented a report that detailed the progress of the Internal Audit Team in delivering the Annual Internal Audit Plan for the year 2016/17 and the outcome of the final Internal Audit reports issued since the meeting of the Audit Committee on 30 June 2016. Since the previous meeting 9 reports had been issued. Against the 2016/17 Internal Audit Plan a total of 6 reviews had commenced, with 3 in progress and 3 final reports issued.

The absence of a team member from a small team for a length of time had an effect on the team. Officers would therefore carry out a review of the resources required and the likely impact on the Internal Audit Plan.

Members discussed the final reports issued, which had been summarised.

*Action 3: Officers to ensure that transparency information is readily available through the Council's website.*



Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That

- a) the report and the progress made by the Internal Audit Team in delivering the 2016/17 Annual Internal Audit Plan be noted; and
- b) **Cabinet be advised that the absence of the Audit, Risk & Anti-Fraud Manager at 3 consecutive meetings of the Audit Committee could hamper the work of the Committee.**

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## COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2017/18

### Cabinet - 10 November 2016

Report of: Chief Finance Officer  
Status: For Decision  
Also considered by: Council - 22 November 2016  
Key Decision: No

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**Executive Summary:** Through the Local Government Finance Act 2012 the Government abolished council tax benefit and placed a requirement on local authorities to have their own Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) from 1 April 2013.

Each financial year the Council must consider whether to confirm or revise its existing CTRS. This report sets out options for the CTRS scheme, the results of the resident consultation and the equality impact assessment. Members' are asked to consider the information set out and make recommendations for the CTRS to be adopted for 2017/18 to be implemented with effect from 1 April 2017.

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**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Searles

**Contact Officer(s)** Adrian Rowbotham, Chief Finance Officer Ext. 7153  
Nick Scott, Head of Revenues and Benefits. Ext. 7397

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**Recommendation to Cabinet:** To consider and agree the following recommendations to Council

**Recommendations to Council:** That

- (a) the outcome of the public consultation and the consultation with Kent County Council as set out at Appendix A and Appendix B to this report are considered and noted.
  - (b) Members have due regard to their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty and considered the potential impacts of the proposed changes on working age claimants with the protected characteristics of disability, age and sex, as set out in the Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix D to this report.
  - (c) it is approved that the following amendments to the current CTRS are adopted and take effect from 1 April 2017:
    - i. The maximum level of support for working-age claimants be reduced from 81.5% to 80%;
    - ii. The Family Premium be removed for all new working-age claimants;
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- iii. The backdating provision be reduced from six months to one month;
  - iv. As a result of concerns raised through consultation, a minimum level of income be introduced for self-employed earners after two years of trading (rather than one year as initially proposed);
  - v. The period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Reduction is reduced from thirteen weeks to four weeks;
  - vi. Foreign nationals with limited immigration status (Persons from Abroad) are excluded from receiving Council Tax Reduction; and
  - vii. A scheme to help claimants suffering exceptional financial hardship is introduced.
- (d) It is also approved, that subject to Government making the relevant amendments to the Housing Benefit regulations, the following amendments to the current CTRS are adopted and take effect from 1 April 2017:
- i. the Work Related Activity Component is removed from the calculation of Council Tax Reduction for new claims from working-age claimants who are in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance; and
  - ii. the dependent child addition used in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction is limited to a maximum of two children.
- (e) The Exceptional Hardship Policy as set out at Appendix C to this report is adopted.

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**Reason for recommendation:** The decision on any amendments to the council's CTRS must be taken by Council. In order to comply with prescribed requirements, the decision of Council must be made by 31 January 2017 in order any amendments to take effect from 1 April 2017.

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### Introduction and Background

- 1 The CTRS replaced Council Tax Benefit (CTB) in 2013. Under the new scheme, the Council was able to devise its own CTRS but this had to be done using a reduced level of funding compared to the fully subsidised CTB scheme.
- 2 Pensioners remained protected under Government regulations, therefore, in order to ensure the Council had a scheme that could be delivered within the level off funding available the maximum level of support for working-age claimants was reduced by 18.5%. This meant that the maximum level of support that could be granted was 81.5% of their council tax liability.
- 3 Since the start of the scheme, the number of claimants has reduced. Although this has resulted in the costs of the CTRS being reduced, funding for the scheme was shown as a separate amount within the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2013/14 but this has not been the case since. Members' will be aware that this council is not expected to receive any Revenue Support Grant

from 2017/18. This has resulted in the cost burden of the scheme now falling on the Council and the major preceptors. The Council has therefore been reviewing the scheme to reduce the cost of it moving forward, whilst also having regard to its most vulnerable residents.

- 4 Members will recall that progress on the review of the CTRS was considered by Finance Advisory Committee on 24 May 2016 and that options for reducing the cost of the scheme from 1 April 2017 were approved for consultation by Cabinet on 14 July 2016.
- 5 The major preceptors currently pay an administration grant of £125,000 per annum to each of the districts to help towards the additional administrative resulting from the CTRS. Through the CTRS, Kent County Council bears the greatest impact on their council tax yield and they are therefore keen to see the districts amend their schemes and reduce the level of financial support awarded. As a result, the major preceptors are reviewing the funding agreement they have with the districts and, were the Council to decide not to amend its current scheme, the major preceptors could withdraw their administration contribution.
- 6 The recommended changes to the CTRS will result in the need to collect more council tax from individuals who may find it difficult to pay. This contribution is therefore essential as it helps support additional staff resources to collect the council tax from working-age claimants.
- 7 The review of the CTRS has been undertaken in liaison with all Kent Districts in order that there remains a 'common approach' across Kent. The objectives of the review have been:
  - to retain the principle of residents paying a contribution towards the Council's costs whilst having regard to its most vulnerable residents;
  - to target support to those most in need;
  - to align the scheme with national changes and forthcoming changes to Housing Benefit;
  - to have regard to the reductions in Government grant and to make the scheme less costly (if possible) and more efficient in terms of its operation.
- 8 The districts have worked with a consultant to come up with a number of proposed amendments to reduce the cost of the scheme whilst also trying to protect the most vulnerable. Consequently, at Cabinet on 14 July 2016, Members agreed to go out to consult on 9 options to adjust the existing scheme. They were:
  - Option1** - To reduce the maximum level of support for working-age claimants from 81.5% to 80%;
  - Option 2** - To remove the Family Premium for all new working-age claimants;

## Agenda Item 5

**Option 3** - To reduce the backdating provision from six months to one month;

**Option 4** - To introduce a minimum level of income for self-employed earners after one year of trading;

**Option 5** - To reduce the period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Reduction from thirteen weeks to four weeks;

**Option 6** - To remove the Work Related Activity Component in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction for new claims from working-age claimants who are in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance;

**Option 7** - To limit the dependent child addition used in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction to a maximum of two children;

**Option 8** - To exclude foreign nationals with limited immigration status (Persons from Abroad) from receiving Council Tax Reduction; and

**Option 9** - To introduce a scheme to help claimants suffering exceptional hardship.

- 9 It was understood that a combination of some, or all, of these possible options might be required in order to achieve the objective of reducing overall costs. Members also agreed to consult on three alternative options to fund changing the scheme. They were increasing council tax for all taxpayers, find savings by reducing other council services or using Council reserves to help fund the scheme.

### The Consultation

- 10 To effect changes to the CTRS, the Council has a legal duty to carry out public consultation and assess the impacts of the proposed changes with regard to equalities. The Council therefore went out to consultation over an eight week period, which ended on 11 September 2016.
- 11 An on-line questionnaire with the options agreed by Members was available on the Council's website over the eight week period. A letter was sent to all working-age claimants advising them of the web link and also giving them an option to request a hard copy of the questionnaire. Registered Social Landlords and third sector organisations were also advised of the consultation and encouraged to respond.
- 12 The complexity of the scheme, as well as the technical nature of the options presented, did not lend itself well to public consultation. However a video was produced and a background information pack was also prepared to ensure those responding to the consultation had an appropriate understanding of the proposals being made. 95% of respondents confirmed they had read the background information and 84% had seen the council's video.
- 13 The number of responses received was relatively low, albeit 91% were from residents in receipt of CTR. With only 139 online responses and 24 hard copy

responses, it is difficult to conclude that the responses provide a representative view from residents across the District.

14 The results of the consultation are shown at Appendix B. Members will note that:

- The majority of respondents, 66%, did not agree to the proposal of increasing council tax to help fund the scheme but 48% said that savings should come from reducing other services and 52% said the Council should use its reserves;
- 33% of respondents agreed with reducing the maximum entitlement to 80%, whilst 56% disagreed (Option 1);
- There was broad agreement to those options that would align the scheme to recently introduced changes and proposed changes to the housing benefit scheme. The only exception was Option 6 where only 22% of respondents agreed with this proposal (Options 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8);
- 38% of respondents were in favour of using a set income level for self-employed claimants, whilst 30% were against (Option 4). However, the consultation response suggested that it may be appropriate to set the period to two years, rather than one, to allow the self-employed more time to develop and establish their business;
- 87% of respondents were overwhelmingly in favour that support be provided through an exceptional hardship fund (Option 9). Although this would not deliver a saving for the scheme, it would offer protection to the most vulnerable and target support to those most in need. This fund would be facilitated through the Collection Fund and would therefore not impact on the Council's General Fund.

15 There is also an obligation for the Council to consult with major precepting bodies. A response has been received from Kent County Council and this is shown at Appendix C. It should be noted that this response is a generic one to all the Kent districts and it reflects the following views:

- They supported the need to amend the schemes;
- Consideration should be given to reducing the maximum discount to below 80%;
- The scheme should synchronise with housing benefit rule changes;
- They supported a minimum income floor being introduced to self-employed assessments; and
- They supported the introduction of an exceptional hardship payment scheme.

### Exceptional Hardship Scheme

- 16 There is a need for a fund to assist those claimants most at risk and considered the most vulnerable. Similar to the current Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) fund within the Housing Benefit scheme, the Exceptional Hardship Scheme will allow limited ability to grant additional financial support to claimants' facing exceptional hardship, as defined within the Exceptional Hardship Policy at Appendix C
- 17 The prime objective of the fund is to:-
- a) Assist claimants to meet their Council Tax liability in full (bearing in mind that the CTRS is designed to provide support for the majority of the Council Tax liability, subject to income and circumstances).
  - b) Prevent exceptional hardship.
  - c) Reduce potential 'write-offs' of Council Tax.
- 18 It is proposed that the fund be built into the overall LCTR scheme but be limited to an agreed amount (similar in nature to the current DHP scheme for Housing Benefit). The level of funding has still to be agreed but, at the time of writing, discussions are progressing with the major preceptors regarding sharing the cost pro-rata based on current Council Tax levels.

### Key Implications

#### Financial

- 19 As part of their review of the administration grant funding level, Kent County Council have now confirmed that they will not look to reduce the overall funding pot to districts providing the districts amend their schemes to reflect the housing benefit changes and uplift the minimum percentage level working-age claimants have to pay towards their council tax liability. As highlighted earlier, this funding is essential to support and maintain council tax collection associated to customers in receipt of CTR.
- 20 Whilst the overall funding pot will not be reduced, the funding will be apportioned in a slightly different way. There needs to be a greater recognition of the caseload each district is managing, rather than just splitting any grant funding on an equal basis. There will therefore be a fixed element plus a variable element based on caseload. The exact details of the funding model are still being progressed, but it is likely that Sevenoaks' funding will be reduced from £125,000 to around £106,000 as the Council's caseload is lower than in some of the other districts. The Revenues and Benefits shared service partnership with Dartford Borough Council will endeavour to maintain the existing staff levels despite this reduction in funding, however, were Members to decide not to agree to the options stipulated by Kent County Council as a condition of their funding, and the funding were to be reduced further or removed altogether, there would then have to be a corresponding reduction in



staff resource which would undoubtedly have a negative impact on council tax collection rates.

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

- 21 The CTRS is governed by the Local Government Finance Act 2012. This requires the Council to consider its CTRS annually and for Council to consider and take a decision before 31 January 2017 on any amendments to the scheme for 2017/18.
- 22 The Council has updated its section 13A Policy for 2017/18, with the recommended amendments, to comply with this requirement. In full, this policy is in excess of 150 pages so a full copy has also been placed in the Members Library.
- 23 The criteria detailed in section 1 of this report provide a summary of the new components being recommended for inclusion in the CTRS for 2017/18.

#### Equality Impact Assessment

- 24 Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups.
- 25 A full equality impact assessment covering the implications of amending the current scheme and introducing a revised scheme from 1 April 2017 is detailed in Appendix D. Taking into account current claimant data and consultation feedback, the equality impact assessment has identified there is potential for adverse impact on some claimants of working age with protected characteristics. Pension age claimants, who also have protected characteristics, will not be affected as they are protected from any changes by central Government.
- 26 Reducing the maximum level of support to 80% could mean working age claimants with disabilities could lose more per week than claimants without disabilities and carers could lose more per week than non-carers. The changes proposed will continue to treat people with disabilities and carers more favourably by maintaining a range of additional allowances and income disregards. Claimants with disabilities and carers, in exceptional hardship, will, subject to the decision of Members, also be able to apply for assistance with payments.
- 27 As there are a high proportion of female claimants overall, there is potential for a negative impact on female claimants of working age who may be affected by more than one option. The combined impact of reducing the maximum level of support to 80%, removing the family premium and limiting the number of dependent children to two, is likely to affect new female claimants in 2017.

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Female and male claimants, in exceptional hardship, will, subject to the decision of Members, be able to apply for assistance with payments.

- 28 As the government has protected pensioners, the impact will fall on working age groups. This impact is as a result of national legislation, and is not within the council's discretion to mitigate. Within working age groups, although the impact on individual age groups may differ for each option, calculation of council tax reduction is not related to a person's age so it is difficult to mitigate any potential adverse impacts on the basis of age alone. Any differences in entitlement are likely to be as a result of other factors e.g. whether the claimant has a disability, is a carer or has children in the household. Options for reducing the impacts based on these factors have been considered.
- 29 Members should note that officers will continue to monitor the impact of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme on claimants with protected characteristics from 2017. Data will be assessed to indicate whether the impacts are in line with predictions or whether any further action may need to be taken to mitigate any impacts. Reports will be provided as appropriate.

### Appendices

- Appendix A - Summary of consultation responses
- Appendix B - Kent County Council consultation response
- Appendix C - Exceptional Hardship Policy
- Appendix D - Equality Impact Assessment

### Background Papers

Local Support for Council Tax scheme - Report to Council (27 November 2012)

<http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=121&MId=1464>

Local Support for Council Tax scheme 2014/15 - Report to Council (17 December 2013)

<http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=121&MId=1665>

Local Support for Council Tax scheme 2015/16 - Report to Council (4 November 2014)

<http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s19897/07b%20Local%20Council%20Tax%20Support%20Scheme%202015-16.pdf>

Local Support for Council Tax scheme 2016/17 - Report to Council (3 November 2015)

<http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s25847/08c%20Local%20Council%20Tax%20Support%20Scheme%202015-16.pdf>

Local Support for Council Tax Scheme rules

[http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/212581/Council-Tax-Support-Local-Schemes-SDC-2016.pdf](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/212581/Council-Tax-Support-Local-Schemes-SDC-2016.pdf)

Local Government Finance Act 2012

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/17/contents>

Minutes of Finance Advisory Committee 24 May 2016

<http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s28912/160524%20-%2024%20May%202016%20Minutes.pdf>

Minutes of Cabinet 14 July 2016

<http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s28915/160714%20-%2014%20July%202016.pdf>

Supporting information accompanying consultation for 2017/18

<http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s28189/09%20Council%20Tax%20Reduction%20Scheme%20-%20App%20B%20-%20Draft%20Consultation%20Document.pdf>

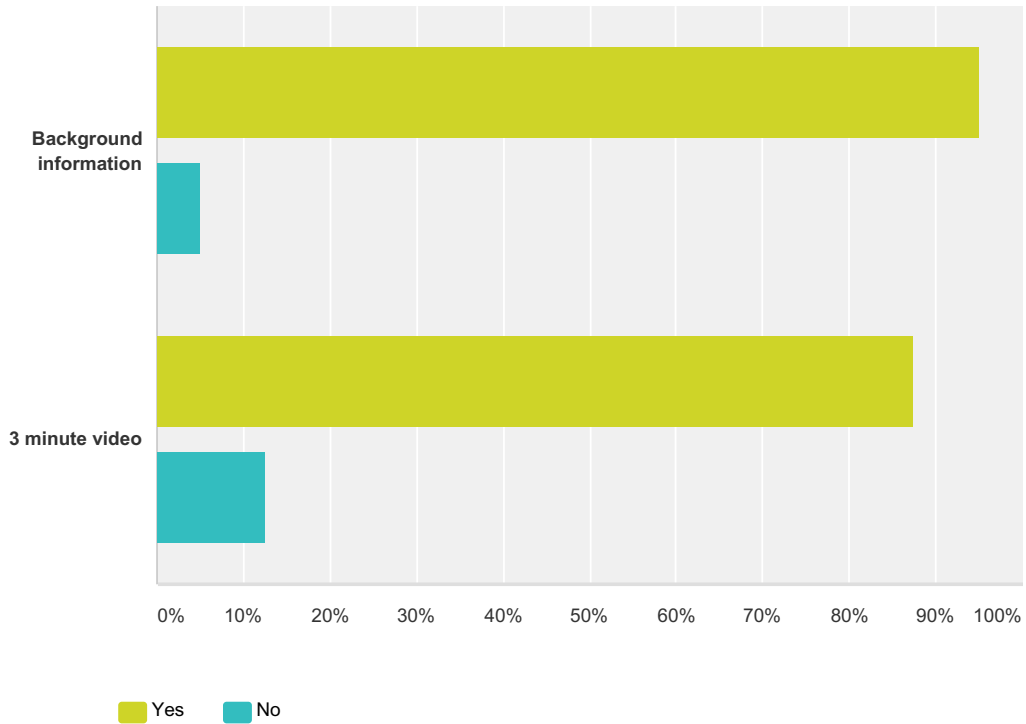
Section 13A Policy for 2017/18 (Council only)

**Adrian Rowbotham**  
**Chief Finance Officer**

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**Q1 Before proceeding with this questionnaire, please confirm that you have read the background information and watched our short 3 minute video that accompanies this consultation.**

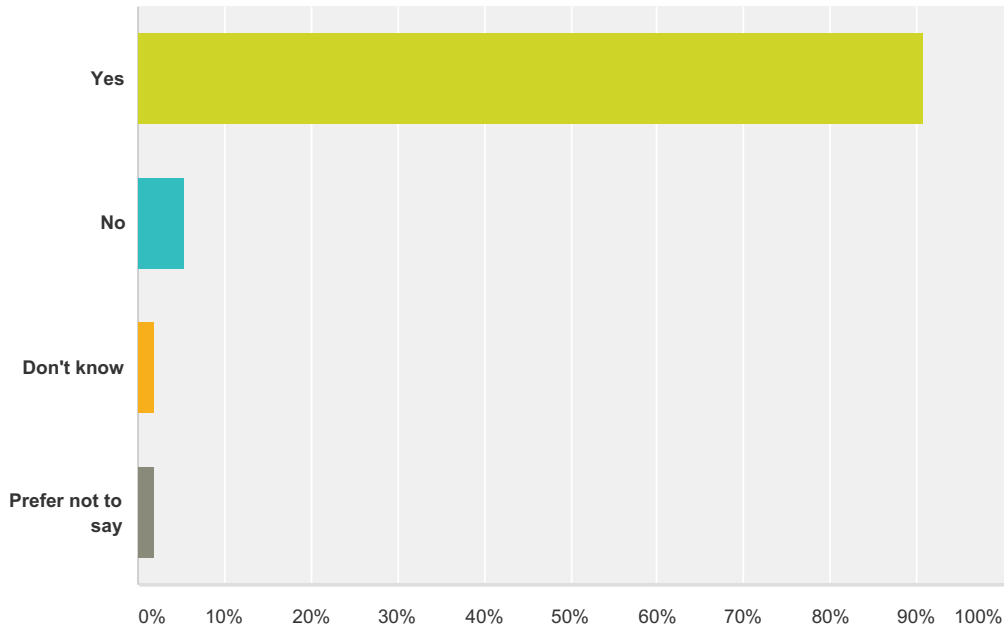
Answered: 163 Skipped: 0



	Yes	No	Total
Background information	94.97% 151	5.03% 8	159
3 minute video	87.42% 132	12.58% 19	151

**Q2 Please tell us whether you or someone in your household is currently receiving Council Tax Reduction**

Answered: 163 Skipped: 0

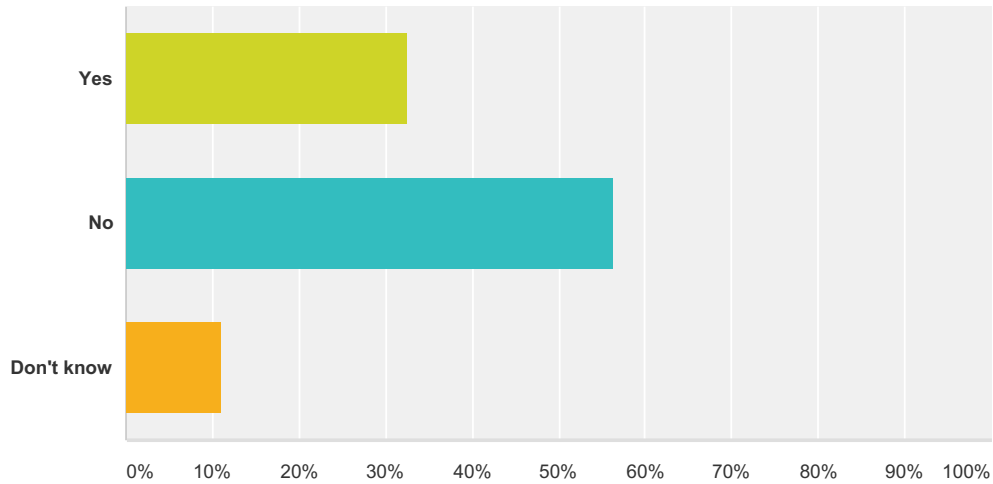


Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	90.80%	148
No	5.52%	9
Don't know	1.84%	3
Prefer not to say	1.84%	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>163</b>

**Option 1: Reduce the maximum level of Council Tax Support awarded to working-age applicants from 18.5% of their council tax liability to 80%**

**Q3 Do you think that Option 1 should be introduced into the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2017/18?**

Answered: 163 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	32.52%	53
No	56.44%	92
Don't know	11.04%	18
<b>Total</b>		<b>163</b>

#	If you have any comments to make on Option 1, please give them below.	Date
1	This seems fair	9/29/2016 1:24 PM
2	I already struggle financially to pay the level of council tax support this would cause further hardship to me. I do not know how I would be able to pay 80%. I have no savings and ongoing ill health so I will not be returning to work. My ill health is considerable and ongoing	9/29/2016 1:15 PM
3	The Government has already frozen support on all benefits, We already pay £18 a month instead of 2 so a time of adjustment is needed because no income for a month	9/29/2016 11:55 AM
4	I struggle to pay the 18.5%	9/29/2016 11:48 AM
5	For some already on low income paying more could mean they are even more unable to cope with all other bills	9/29/2016 10:18 AM
6	Individuals on lowest income still here to pay a portion of their council tax and as it isn't calculated on their income very unfair.	9/16/2016 4:08 PM
7	Only if you also introduce an exceptional hardship Scheme as well for all those on limited income or basic benefits who cant afford more especially as council tax continues to rise as do bills and other essentials	9/16/2016 2:47 PM
8	My daughter has learning difficulties and bad health and social phobia so cannot work to earn any money. We are pensioners ourselves and have to look after our daughter best we can this extra would be a burden on us	9/16/2016 2:41 PM
9	Stop squeezing money out of those who can least afford it. No one who earns over a certain amount of money should get any benefits at all, including pension.	9/8/2016 12:49 PM
10	I am surprised people can claim 80% off their bills. This seems incredibly excessive!!	9/4/2016 11:01 PM
11	I feel life is hard enough for people on a low income to manage paying necessary bills and juggling family finances.	8/11/2016 4:01 PM
12	We are finding it hard to pay already	8/9/2016 5:56 PM
13	I put my heating on for 2 ours in the morning to get children ready for school then 2 hours to put them to bed. They have to wear jumpers etc and complain they can t do homework . I think I will go further into debt if you make these changes and I will lose a home for the children.	8/7/2016 11:05 PM

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14	I think changing this will put families in higher financial difficulty resulting in poor accommodation, poor quality of life, lack of food.. Asking someone to pay an extra £30 or more pounds a week is far too much. I think maybe reductions to 81% or if needs be would be more beneficial to struggling families.	8/6/2016 9:59 AM
15	It seems this option would have the least financial impact on majority of claimants	8/5/2016 2:15 PM
16	i understand that the government keep doing cuts but people on benefits are struggling already and although it may not seem much to lose to some people, when you are on benefits every penny helps!!!	8/3/2016 3:19 PM
17	In principle this seems fair due to government cutbacks. My concern is that this would generate a steady increase to the cut backs, making those who really need this support unable to pay or provide the basics for their children!	8/2/2016 3:48 PM
18	The vast amount of punishing and harsh Welfare reforms such as; Job centre sanctions, the benefit cap, the bedroom tax, frozen benefits rates and numerous other penalising tactics are causing so much hardship, poverty, ill health and stress to families and individuals already, any further pressures or reductions of help to people such as the reduction of Council Tax relief, will cause real further damage and will tip some over the edge. People are and have become desperate, they often plunging into debt and despair. Finding work is not always easy, it's an employers market, and those who are older or have disabilities are especially finding it impossible. Working families and individuals on low wages are struggling also. Introduce measures to increase what the wealthiest pay, and Sevenoaks district has enough of those goodness knows, in order to balance the books! It's time they were made to pay more, they're sitting comfortably in their big houses, with their big pay packets! STOP HITTING THE POOREST IN SOCIETY ENOUGH ENOUGH! We were supposedly "all in it together" huh ???	7/28/2016 6:42 AM
19	but i think those on long term sick should will find it hard to pay as benefits are not going up to cover this	7/27/2016 2:26 PM
20	I agree in theory but I wouldn't like it to rise uncontrollably. I do not work and I rely on the reduction of council tax. I have a severe mental problem that makes me impossible to work.	7/26/2016 3:28 PM
21	I struggle to pay out all I need to with the money I receive already, so having to pay more would cause me significant financial problems.	7/26/2016 3:21 PM
22	That's all we can afford out of the benefits we receive & I am disabled permanently.	7/26/2016 11:16 AM
23	The reason is that I'm disabled and I have children that are too. I'm currently unable to work due to illness	7/25/2016 5:45 PM
24	I struggle to pay the council tax and the rent I have to pay now without having to find more money from nowhere	7/25/2016 5:08 PM
25	1.5% isn't going to make much of a difference to me.	7/25/2016 3:51 PM
26	I think there must be some other way to deal with this as i Don't have a lot of money coming in and find it hard to find the £13 your asking me for each month as it is. our money did not go up this year so to add more to the tax will only make us have less to live on.	7/25/2016 3:28 PM
27	I struggle well below the minimum wage and even though I am very careful with my usage of household amenities my bills are still extortionate. The bills go up every year but the money I struggle on doesn't. I have no disposable income at all. Everything I have is divided between paying bills and buying food. I'm not complaining because I just about manage to make it work out and manage to survive but I can't continue to weather constant increases in how much I have to pay out.	7/25/2016 12:56 PM
28	A lot of people like ourselves are having difficulties now	7/25/2016 12:23 PM
29	This would hit those with disabilities hardest and is already FAR too high and should NEVER have been increased to this level in the first place. I already struggle to pay the existing amount	7/23/2016 11:58 AM
30	Even though I am currently receiving benefits, I know the position of the council at this time, an extra 31p per will make little difference to my financial burden. I understand that being on benefits means I have to be careful until I get back into employment.	7/23/2016 10:41 AM
31	As acknowledged, the cuts will impact on the most vulnerable in society, especially children. Reducing the support available to those who are already subsisting on a low income, gives rise to potential social reactions that are likely to cost more to address than any savings accrued by way of reducing Council Tax Support. As demonstrated by the positive correlation between rises in crime and increased poverty.	7/23/2016 4:13 AM
32	im registered as disabled and receive dla and esa , I also lost my wife and now live on my own , I struggle enough now with having to pay £20 per month and also the £63 per month bedroom tax, I do understand the government is cutting down money but why is it the poorest and most vulnerable that get penalised due to cuts , I'm beside with worry now and really hope that people receiving disability and can no longer work due to no fault of their own get more cuts , I worked as a heating engineer for over 25 years, my life changed overnight due to an accident and struggle on a daily basis , which is bad enough , but hope the government. wake up and understand councils have to make ends meet and stop the unfair treatment of disabled people who can't return to work due	7/22/2016 5:04 PM
33	This is something I could manage to pay given that I am on ESA support as I am disabled	7/22/2016 1:55 PM
34	I don't see how one can justify a system where national income tax has a threshold of £11,000 below which a person pays nothing, yet someone bringing in half ( or even less ) of that can be expected to pay a local tax. There is something fundamentally unjust about any tax that exists regardless of ability to pay.	7/22/2016 12:46 PM



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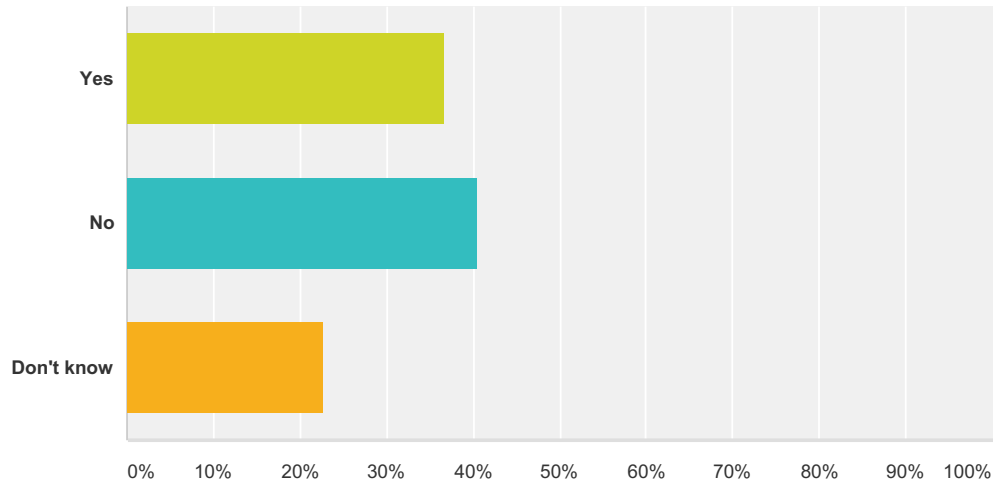
35	I am in dire hardship now and if it's reduced further I don't know what I will do ? I thought I would be better off working even though I went through a mental breakdown and was basically forced back into work I thought maybe rather than fight the system to prove I was unfit to work I would just let the system get its way .. before I was on full housing benefit and full council tax now I am over 1,000 in arrears with my rent and am also in arrears with my council tax the reason ? I live in edenbridge and my job moved to Tunbridge wells train fares £200 a month had to find a job in edenbridge which I managed I have had no wages yet since 20th June when I started this job ! I like others have had to borrow money to live and pay what I can when I can in the way of bills .	7/22/2016 11:18 AM
36	I am a single parent and am finding it hard to live on and pay what I already have to towards the council tax which has left me in arrears on more then one occasion	7/22/2016 10:25 AM
37	I believe strongly that it would cause the individuals, or the families, who are in receipt of this Council Tax Support financial problems. These are the people who are most in need of support. I believe that if the maximum level of Council Tax Support was reduced (again) it would become a 'slippery slope' with every year, or couple of years, it being reduced further. If Option 1 was NOT introduced it would mean that Sevenoaks District Council would not need to introduce a scheme to help claimants suffering exceptional financial hardship and thereby save further costs. I believe strongly that introducing one (or a combination) of Options 3, 4, 5, 7 or 8 should be introduced instead.	7/22/2016 10:02 AM
38	We are already paying £23 a month towards council tax. Where do I get the other 1.5% from? My utility bills will probably increase by more than that in 2017 so where do I take it from? My disability benefit inflation increases will be eaten up with any increase in council tax.	7/21/2016 3:25 PM
39	We only get enough benefits to pay things like gas electric food water life insurance clothing petrol to take to doctor hospital as my partner is disabled and can't work so she should not be classed as a worker and another council still pay 100% council tax if on benifit so I think it wrong to pay council tax as we don't get money to pay towards council tax in are benefit	7/21/2016 2:09 PM
40	this would cause hardship for disabled people	7/21/2016 12:49 PM
41	Disabled and ill people receiving DLA,PIP or in the support group of ESA should not contribute towards CT.Before the Government reduced funding many people received full support which has now been reduced by 18.5%.Disabled and ill people in particular are among the poorest group in the country.Benefits are frozen and with living costs continuing to rise the reduction in support causes greater hardship to very vulnerable members of society.	7/21/2016 11:32 AM

## Agenda Item 5

### Option 2: Remove the Family Premium for all new working age applicants

#### Q4 Do you think that Option 2 should be introduced into the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2017/18?

Answered: 163 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	36.81%	60
No	40.49%	66
Don't know	22.70%	37
<b>Total</b>		<b>163</b>

#	If you have any comments to make on Option 2, please give them below.	Date
1	Family premium should be in children	9/29/2016 1:29 PM
2	May be parents will make cutbacks themselves eg smoking, drinking tattoos expensive gifts for the child children or find other ways instead. IT CAN BE DONE they need to be shown how.	9/29/2016 11:57 AM
3	Although I think paying it for single parents on low income with one child only regardless of when claim might be considered as these can have severe difficulties	9/16/2016 2:49 PM
4	everything should be means tested	9/8/2016 12:51 PM
5	Instead of removing why don't you try reducing it.	8/6/2016 10:01 AM
6	I think families are supported much more than those who have no family and its SO NOT FAIR!	8/3/2016 3:21 PM
7	This premium for many would be significant. I know if i was a new claim this, this would make a huge difference to my weekly costings	8/2/2016 3:50 PM
8	As previously written to question 1) and again - pick on someone else for a change I.e The wealthiest ! Increase their contribution they mostly wouldnt even notice an increase let alone feel it! Whilst the poorest are being slaughtered time and again and its causing deviating effects.	7/28/2016 6:49 AM
9	money will have to be made savings somewhere. you cannot please everybody. I live alone and have no dependants. if anyone works they can afford the council tax.	7/26/2016 3:37 PM
10	Households with young children have significantly more responsibilities which make working as many hours as someone who has no children much more difficult. Households with no children do not have childcare costs either.	7/22/2016 5:41 PM
11	This does not apply to me	7/22/2016 1:56 PM
12	This proposal is ultimately going to end up penalising children for belonging to poor families.	7/22/2016 12:49 PM
13	This option is non applicable to myself so I feel it inappropriate to comment.	7/22/2016 12:21 PM
14	Nationally, working age households with children are the group most likely to fall into poverty. No measures should be introduced which target households with children.	7/22/2016 10:57 AM

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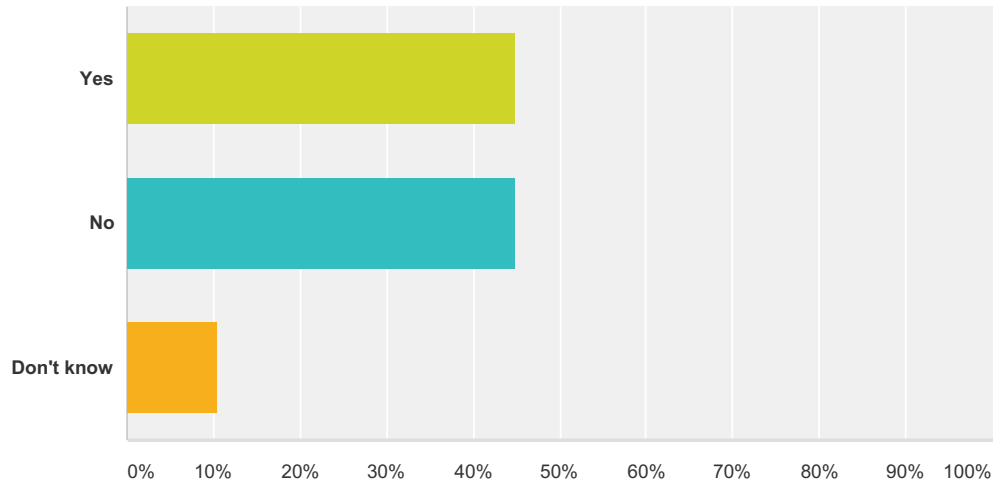
15	I believe strongly that it would cause the individuals, or the families, who are in receipt of this Council Tax Support financial problems. Together with those that are in receipt of Council tax Reduction, these are the people who are most in need of support. If Option 1 was NOT introduced it would mean that Sevenoaks District Council would not need to introduce a scheme to help claimants suffering exceptional financial hardship and thereby save further costs. I believe strongly that introducing one (or a combination) of Options 3, 4, 5, 7 or 8 should be introduced instead.	7/22/2016 10:02 AM
16	Fed up with people with lots of kids getting loads of extra benefits, if they are struggling to pay bills etc then don't have all these kids.	7/21/2016 3:26 PM

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### Option 3: Reduce the backdating provision from 6 months to 1 month

#### Q5 Do you think that Option 3 should be introduced into the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2017/18?

Answered: 163 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	44.79%	73
No	44.79%	73
Don't know	10.43%	17
<b>Total</b>		<b>163</b>

#	If you have any comments to make on Option 3, please give them below	Date
1	Since the applicant is entitled to CT benefit so the person should be paid backdated 6 months	9/29/2016 1:30 PM
2	Some cases only?	9/29/2016 1:25 PM
3	Agon its a case of budgeting, knowing they will be getting less of a reduction backdated	9/29/2016 11:58 AM
4	May be reduce it to 3 months as 1 month seems not sufficient time in case there are any issues	9/29/2016 10:29 AM
5	I feel that if your in a position where you need this sort of help surely it wouldn't take months to know it	9/29/2016 10:19 AM
6	If someone was suffering a mental illness - this would really penalise them through no fault of their own.	9/16/2016 4:08 PM
7	Provided they have good reason for not doing earlier I don't think this option should occur as when people in dire straits they cant always think what to do quickly although why this wouldn't make both claims immediately (for housing too) I wouldn't know.	9/16/2016 3:10 PM
8	If people in difficulty need time to get back on their feet and I think one month is not enough time	9/16/2016 2:42 PM
9	3 Months would be better	9/16/2016 2:34 PM
10	Most definitely	9/4/2016 11:04 PM
11	I think 1 month is enough backdating.	8/6/2016 10:02 AM
12	Reduce to 3 months	8/5/2016 2:16 PM
13	Perhaps reduce it from 6 months to 3 months	8/4/2016 4:35 PM
14	I dont think its fair to SO drastically cut it from 6 months to 1 month because its not claimants faults most of the time that everything takes so long to sort out!!	8/3/2016 3:24 PM
15	6 months does seem quiet a long time. Maybe 1 month is not enough, say if someone was terminally ill for example or involved in a car accident and was sedated for some time. Could this not be reduced to 3 months instead??	8/2/2016 3:52 PM
16	See answer to questions 1) and 2) NO Stop trying to get blood out of a stone, the poor are and have been being bled dry, its time the richest gave more "were all in this together" supposedly!	7/28/2016 6:53 AM

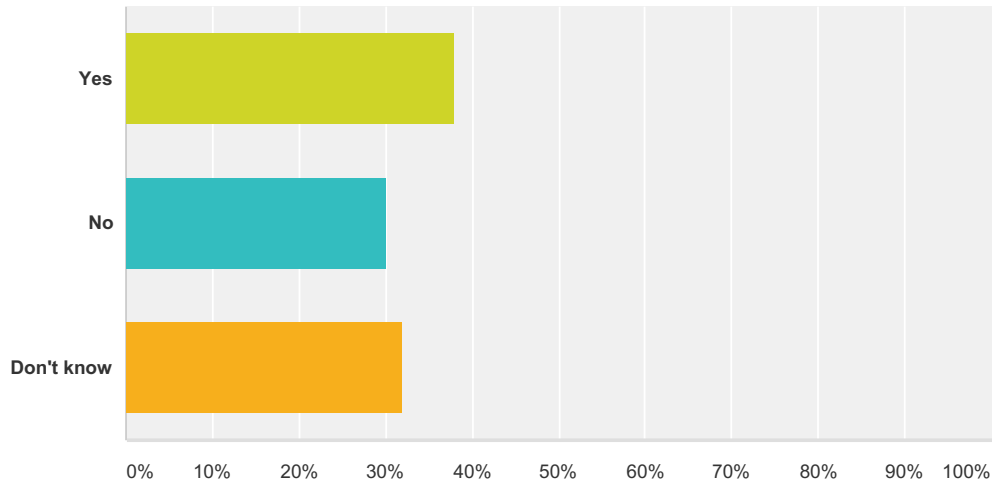
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17	six mths has always been to long	7/27/2016 2:27 PM
18	Reducing this appears logical but to take it to one month is too severe. Three months would be more realistic	7/27/2016 10:59 AM
19	People might have good and valid reasons why they need a little more time. employers can be very slow.	7/26/2016 3:40 PM
20	The reason is that it will mean that it can take longer to sort out someone's new claim. And if that person is unable to work etc due to illness or being a single parent, how will they pay the 5 months of council tax back to the council? This will leave many people in a lot of debit.	7/25/2016 5:48 PM
21	Some people may be in hospital in a serious condition and unable to make a claim within one month	7/25/2016 5:10 PM
22	Back date to only 2/3 would help.	7/25/2016 3:52 PM
23	Some people can't always get the help to fill in your forms and have to hold on for help from you or the CAB and there for need help filling in the forms. to change this to one month will be a big mistake as it can take a long time to get the help needed at the time. you would then put them in debt and then there find it even harder to pay this off	7/25/2016 3:33 PM
24	I realize that you must make some reductions and savings somewhere and the backdating for six months money does seem excessive. Backdating for a month appears to me more than adequate.	7/25/2016 1:00 PM
25	you cant back date tax credit either, the claim should be from the day you called or put in your claim.	7/24/2016 12:24 PM
26	If the system is monitored properly and the 'good reason' is verified, 6 months is a fair period. Although I can't imagine why it would take 6 months to claim!	7/23/2016 10:45 AM
27	why should it be rejuce from six months to one month when the people need the help with there council tax.	7/23/2016 3:11 AM
28	I feel it should be 3 months minimum, nobody should take 6 months to sort things out.	7/22/2016 7:45 PM
29	Perhaps 3 months would be more reasonable.	7/22/2016 5:41 PM
30	Only backdating 1 month does not allow much time for things to be sorted out if claimants have other claims ongoing which also affect benefit provision. 3 months backdate is a more reasonable amount of time rather than the drastic reduction to just 1 month.	7/22/2016 1:58 PM
31	because it take you 6 week to look at someone claim	7/22/2016 10:53 AM
32	Sometimes it is not the fault of the claimant why the application forms get delayed reducing the backdated from 6 months to 1 month could possibly leave a lot of people in rent arrears that they are unable to clear	7/22/2016 10:28 AM
33	It would encourage working-age claimants to not delay their application for Council Tax Reduction.	7/22/2016 10:02 AM
34	maybe 3 months	7/22/2016 9:20 AM
35	I think a fairer time frame would be 2 months, especially as it can take the council 6-8 weeks to respond to applications to request for more information.	7/21/2016 4:29 PM

**Option 4: Introduce a 'Minimum Income Floor' for self-employed claimants after their first year of trading**

**Q6 Do you think that Option 4 should be introduced into the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2017/18?**

Answered: 163 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	38.04%	62
No	30.06%	49
Don't know	31.90%	52
<b>Total</b>		<b>163</b>

#	If you have any comments to make on Option 4, please give them below.	Date
1	I was self employed for about 20 years, I don't know of any self employed person working around 35 hours per week. I worked 60 to 75 hours depending on weather and time of year. I didn't know there was such a scheme	9/29/2016 12:00 PM
2	This would put a newly self employed person under a lot of pressure especially if income is "assumed" should still be calculated on ability to pay.	9/16/2016 4:10 PM
3	I'm not sure about this because it might stop people being self employed or stop them putting more money into business and also trying to grow a business too quickly ( to make more money) can be a quick way to go bankrupt! Sounds good in theory but id allow at best 2 to 3 years before MIF applied	9/16/2016 3:14 PM
4	If self employed could have periods of no work or illness, so should only be based on whats actually earned	9/16/2016 2:43 PM
5	Being self employed is not easy and can be affected by fluctuations in markets and economy. I can understand that IF people are not trying to maximise their self employment earnings it is not fair to supplement these with benefits. However, there are many reasons why people are self employed rather than employed and many reasons why their income may not be at the minimum wage level - not necessarily because they are 'happy to be subsidised' by council tax relief. Often, these days, if made redundant and not quickly able to gain new employment, people try self employment rather than unemployment.	8/30/2016 2:33 PM
6	I think 1 year doesn't seem long enough to establish a business I would be more inclined to agree with 2 or 3 years.	8/6/2016 10:03 AM
7	This is also a good option because self-employed people can easily claim back so much under 'tax'	8/3/2016 3:26 PM
8	A self employed individuals means need to be assessed fairly! Many people are often being pushed into being self employed by the job centre to disguise jobless figures , and/or desperation because of poor job prospects. Their REAL ability to pay or not must be assessed as individuals.	7/28/2016 7:01 AM
9	This needs to ensure that people are not penalized for working where they would be better off not working.	7/27/2016 11:00 AM
10	people would want they money quickly and be assured of some help to cover their immediate situations.	7/26/2016 3:45 PM
11	I don't like the assumption of earnings part as life doesn't often work out quite the way one would assume or prefer.	7/25/2016 1:05 PM

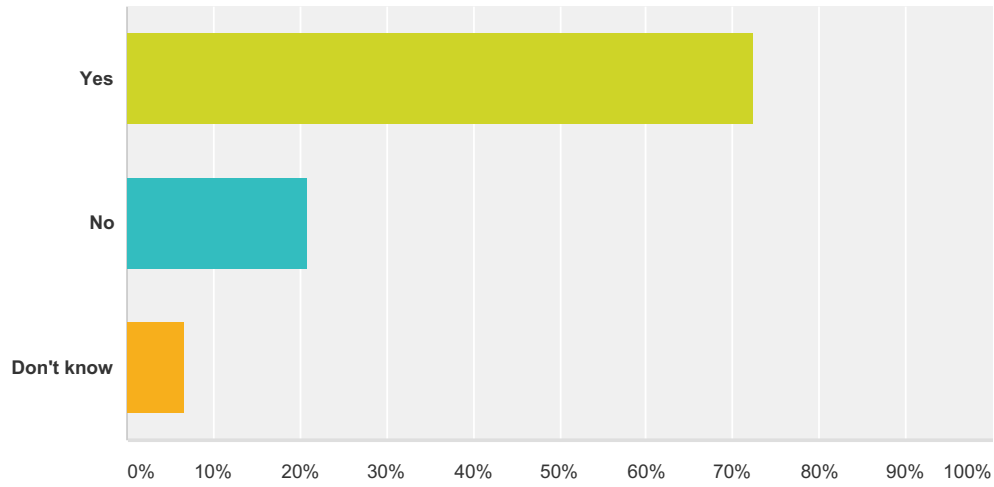
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12	there may be valid reasons as to why someone works only 8 hours a week as self-employed i.e. a carer?	7/25/2016 9:31 AM
13	It is hard for childminders to grow their business as they work from home and have a limit of three children under 5 years. Unless they choose to expand and have the financial backing to work from a larger premise and employ additional staff. That would also be going away from childminding and into the Nursery side of childcare and very few childminders have the funding or premises to do this. So no I think this option is unfair.	7/24/2016 12:32 PM
14	After 1 year of trading any business should be self-supporting.	7/23/2016 10:46 AM
15	In effect this measure could act to deter the would be self-employed from attempting a self-employed start up or enduring a sub-threshold income after the first year of trading.	7/23/2016 4:20 AM
16	Not applicable to me because I am not self employed.	7/22/2016 7:46 PM
17	I am extremely concerned by the MIF concept which I think is very misguided. I think it is unreasonable to presume that because a self-employed person works 35hours a week that they earn the minimum wage for each and every hour. In reality self-employed people are some of the hardest working people with no holiday pay, sick pay or regular hours. However many of the tasks they are solely responsible for are unpaid and time consuming ie. accounts, quotations, admin, travelling to and from clients, dealing with technology issues, websites, promotion, advertising etc. The MIF threatens to penalise self employed people and force many niche, talented and creative people into unskilled minimum wage jobs. We should be supporting these business ventures more to promote diversity, culture and creativity.	7/22/2016 5:49 PM
18	Does not apply to me	7/22/2016 1:58 PM
19	It is hard enough being self employed without the council making assumptions like this. Base it on ACTUAL income.	7/22/2016 12:29 PM
20	Non applicable to myself.	7/22/2016 12:22 PM
21	Self-employed people are already disadvantaged in many ways - no sick pay, no JSA etc. It's hard to believe that they would deliberately earn less than they could just to get a bit more CTR.	7/22/2016 11:00 AM
22	It would encourage self-employed claimants to work at making a profit in their business and it would have the safeguard of it not applying for a designated start-up period of one year from the start of the business and there would be variations applying to part-time workers.	7/22/2016 10:02 AM
23	How can you charge people who are self employed? they may not even earn the money they have projected to earn. It's hard being self employed.	7/21/2016 3:27 PM

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**Option 5. Reduce the period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Reduction from 13 weeks to four weeks**

**Q7 Do you think that Option 5 should be introduced into the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2017/18?**

Answered: 163 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	72.39%	118
No	20.86%	34
Don't know	6.75%	11
<b>Total</b>		<b>163</b>

#	If you have any comments to make an Option 5, please give them below.	Date
1	If you leave the UK you don't get benefits	9/29/2016 1:26 PM
2	If people don't stay in their homes for more then two weeks holiday benefits should be stopped and they should have to reapply other than staying in hospital. If anyone can afford to be out of Great Britain they can afford to pay their Council Tax	9/29/2016 12:46 PM
3	Hopefully will work on people working abroad BUT not armed forces, Doctors, Nurses etc. People who choose to work eg Holiday Reps and Hospitality because they go for sun, sea and fun as well as working	9/29/2016 12:14 PM
4	Seems a huge drop! Maybe 6 weeks would be a fairer figure as some relatives may live abroad. Those relatives may finance that family to visit them. It maybe the only chance they get to visit them that year? 4 weeks seems awfully short?	9/29/2016 10:31 AM
5	Surely if they are able to spend such an extended time the country they cannot really warrant it	9/29/2016 10:20 AM
6	Surely a person should be present in their home in order to qualify for Council Tax reduction.	9/16/2016 4:11 PM
7	Bad idea will stop people working abroad and all that extra paperwork for them and yourselves for the many who do this regularly (Army , Navy and so on) If must do this I'd suggest 10 weeks at first for a while - several years	9/16/2016 3:40 PM
8	This should be a given!	9/4/2016 11:05 PM
9	I think this is ok if the exceptions are reasonable.	8/30/2016 2:33 PM
10	I agree.	8/6/2016 10:05 AM
11	Perhaps reduce it from 13 weeks to 6 weeks.	8/4/2016 4:35 PM
12	Some people have to go abroad for extended periods for health reasons!!	8/3/2016 3:27 PM
13	Didn't realise this was an option. Unless it was for medical treatment or visiting a terminally ill relative for example, not sure why you would / could spend so much time away from the UK. Maybe the length of time shouldnt be reviewed, more of what the reason is for not being in the UK	8/2/2016 3:55 PM
14	Unless real reasons to the contrary can be shown.	7/28/2016 7:03 AM



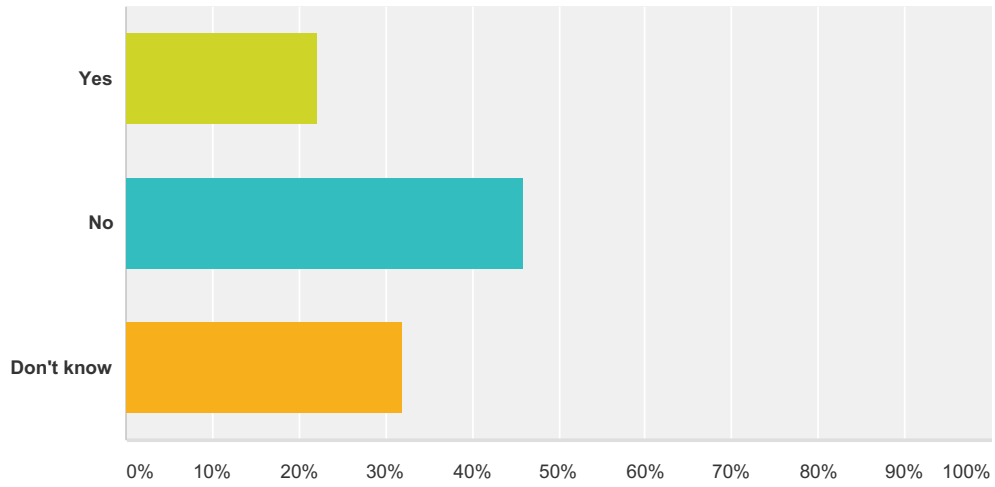
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15	This isn't clear. Does this include holidays? There is a huge gap between the present and the proposed time periods. Needs more clarification.	7/27/2016 11:02 AM
16	it is unfair for people to be absent for 3 months and still get council tax benefit. you have to draw the line somewhere.	7/26/2016 3:48 PM
17	What happens if that person has to go away because of family being unwell. This would not be fair	7/25/2016 5:49 PM
18	if there not in the uk then they they should not get the support. if they leave the uk then they must have the money to pay there tax .	7/25/2016 3:35 PM
19	Limiting a person's freedom of movement to only four weeks a year seems to me like a prison sentence. If you must reduce the number of weeks a person is allowed to receive benefits and be absent from the UK or their house then a reduction to a maximum of ten weeks seems much fairer.	7/25/2016 1:14 PM
20	I don't understand why people should still receive benefits if they are not residing in the uk for 13 weeks. If they can afford to go abroad do they need help with benefits??	7/24/2016 12:36 PM
21	If you can be abroad for that long, you should in general be able to pay your way.	7/23/2016 10:48 AM
22	For those who are required to travel outside of the UK for social needs or the welfare of others, such a measure would amount to an unfair restriction on those who attempt to discharge their moral and family obligations. Further, where an intended return to the UK might be delayed as a consequence of factors beyond an individual's control. It would appear unreasonable / disproportionate to impose such a penalty. In fact, the measure may be perceived as a deterrent against travel in Europe given the uncertainty and discord surrounding Brexit.	7/23/2016 4:28 AM
23	If a claimant can afford to go abroad (!) they shouldn't be claiming Council Tax Reduction in the first place!, obviously don't need the financial assistance if they are going on foreign holidays!	7/22/2016 7:47 PM
24	I think 6 weeks is more reasonable.	7/22/2016 5:49 PM
25	they should not be getting any benefits if they if they temporarily absent from Gb for up to 13 wks	7/22/2016 10:57 AM
26	It would encourage those in receipt of Council Tax Reduction to not be able to spend their time out of Great Britain. It appears unfair that someone who is in receipt of benefits could spend 13 weeks, i.e. a considerable amount of the year, outside Great Britain, e.g. on holiday, whilst still being in receipt of Council Tax Reduction for their home located in Sevenoaks District Council.	7/22/2016 10:02 AM
27	4 weeks is a reasonable time for holiday or looking for work abroad	7/22/2016 9:22 AM
28	If they can afford to be abroad for long periods of time, then they can afford to pay council tax.	7/21/2016 3:28 PM

**Option 6 Remove the Work Related Activity Component (WRAC) in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction for new claims from working-age claimants who are in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance**

**Q8 Do you think that Option 6 should be introduced into the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2017/18?**

Answered: 163 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	22.09%	36
No	46.01%	75
Don't know	31.90%	52
<b>Total</b>		<b>163</b>

#	If you have any comments to make on Option 6, please give them below.	Date
1	Don't understand	9/29/2016 1:26 PM
2	Maybe they will make it a priority to get a job rather than depend on handouts	9/29/2016 12:15 PM
3	Again if someone cant get a job but is considered capable for work this would put an unfair burden onto their already limited income!	9/16/2016 4:17 PM
4	Unemployed and disabled have a bad enough time as it is in my opinion (forgetting those who could work but wont and we cant judge)	9/16/2016 3:46 PM
5	if this is a new claimant only	9/16/2016 2:44 PM
6	I don't fully understand this.	8/6/2016 10:06 AM
7	My reasoning again is that benefits are being cut left right and center and we struggle to survive!!	8/3/2016 3:31 PM
8	See answer to 1) 2) 3) etc again. People with even minor health problems can find it far harder to gain and stay in employment - once again it an employers market they can pick and choose, those with l'lll health and or disabilities are discriminated against although iits illegal, its hard to prove its happened. Plus thee assessment s are often grossly unfair and unreliability bias.	7/28/2016 7:10 AM
9	This is a financial incentive to encourage people to actively seek work , if I have understood it.	7/27/2016 11:04 AM
10	I myself I am receipt of ESA, and did attend a assessment and was told not to work as I was regarded as unfit due to extreme anxiety. Any money coming in is so precious and needed. I deemed fit for work then their should be measures in place for that.	7/26/2016 4:03 PM
11	This would be unfair because that person might be seriously unwell and not able to work	7/25/2016 5:50 PM
12	Would mental health problems also be considered? These are not so easy to diagnose and I myself have suffered from such disorders in the past although I did not claim any benefits to help me cope. It seems to me that this would amount to victimization of a potentially vulnerable group although every case should be considered separately and upon its own merits.	7/25/2016 1:20 PM

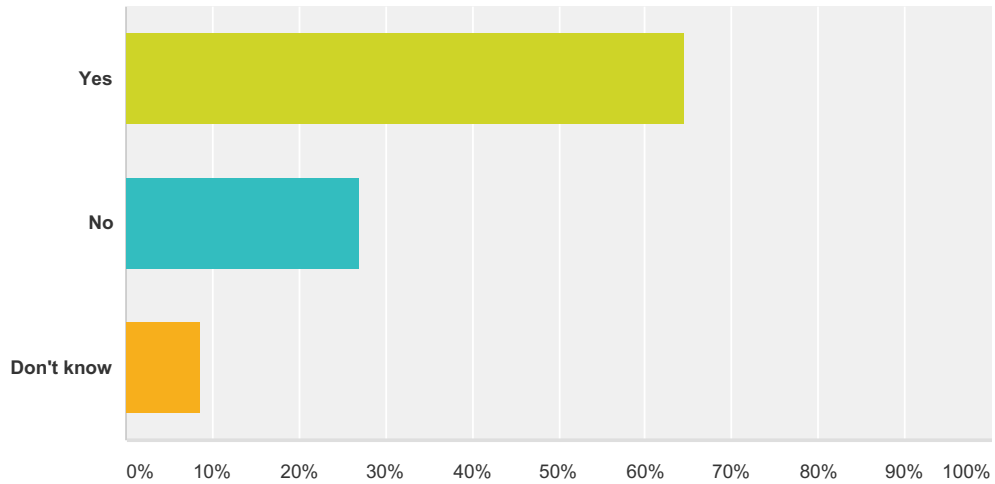
## Agenda Item 5

13	Dont really understand what this involves.	7/24/2016 12:39 PM
14	This is unfair. Those who are placed in WRG of ESA are often then moved to the support group. Removing the WRAG component would mean more paperwork for those moved to support group and causes a lot of unnecessary anxiety to those already suffering illness and disability.	7/22/2016 2:02 PM
15	This option does not make any sense. As the work related component of ESA is being removed anyway in 2017, making the amount the same as JSA, there will effectively be no 'component' to remove from Council Tax anyway.	7/22/2016 1:02 PM
16	I don't know how much wrac totals.	7/22/2016 12:24 PM
17	I am concerned for those who have a disability which makes it difficult for them to find employment. I believe strongly that these people need all the support that the Council can provide.	7/22/2016 10:02 AM
18	This is the government again, picking on disabled and vulnerable people. Some deemed to be suitable for work when they are not!	7/21/2016 3:29 PM

**Agenda Item 5  
Option 7: Limit the dependent child addition used in the calculation of  
Council Tax Reduction to a maximum of two children**

**Q9 Do you think that Option 7 should be introduced into the Council Tax  
Reduction Scheme for 2017/18?**

Answered: 163 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	64.42%	105
No	26.99%	44
Don't know	8.59%	14
<b>Total</b>		<b>163</b>

#	If you have any comments to make on Option 7, please give them below.	Date
1	May be they will be more careful less babies the better	9/29/2016 12:15 PM
2	This clearly is going to have a major financial impact on struggling families in excess of 2 children	9/29/2016 10:32 AM
3	If people wish to continue extending their family they should ensure they can afford to do so. Where families continue having more children it is not right to expect Governments to pay for this	9/29/2016 10:21 AM
4	This should only be considered for family that haven't yet chosen to have children, not put onto families that already have a lot of children - again unfair.	9/16/2016 4:20 PM
5	Good idea as long as its made widely known that this will happen and two children are limit (excluding multiple births as you say) This might also help with immigrants - if made widely known (I'm not prejudicial but there are / should be limitation)	9/16/2016 3:49 PM
6	This seems harsh for relatively small savings. If a family has more than two children and circumstances change such that they need council tax relief it does not seem right to penalise for a larger family, which is not illegal. Perhaps if they are on council tax relief and add additional children then maybe some limitation could be applied.	8/30/2016 2:38 PM
7	I think 2 children supported by council is enough. Providing the over areas are cut/ reduced or it could mean many families loosing 100 pounds each week to support them	8/6/2016 10:08 AM
8	Definitely.	8/4/2016 4:39 PM
9	If people want more children,they should only have kids if they can afford them!!	8/3/2016 3:32 PM
10	most people have 2 or 3 chilldren, so i guess this would need to be the cap. I am sure some with 4+ children benefit greatly	8/2/2016 3:57 PM
11	This is getting laborious! No no no - child poverty is at disgusting levels and increasing with every new way the government or its agents can manoeuvre it. Why not just bring back the victorian workhouses and done with it? Its already a disgrace that to prevent child and adults suffering malnutrition or starvation we have to have food banks in 2016! Let the wealthiest pay more, they can afford it, the poorest can not!	7/28/2016 7:18 AM
12	this a good thing and you should fall in line with everything else	7/27/2016 2:32 PM

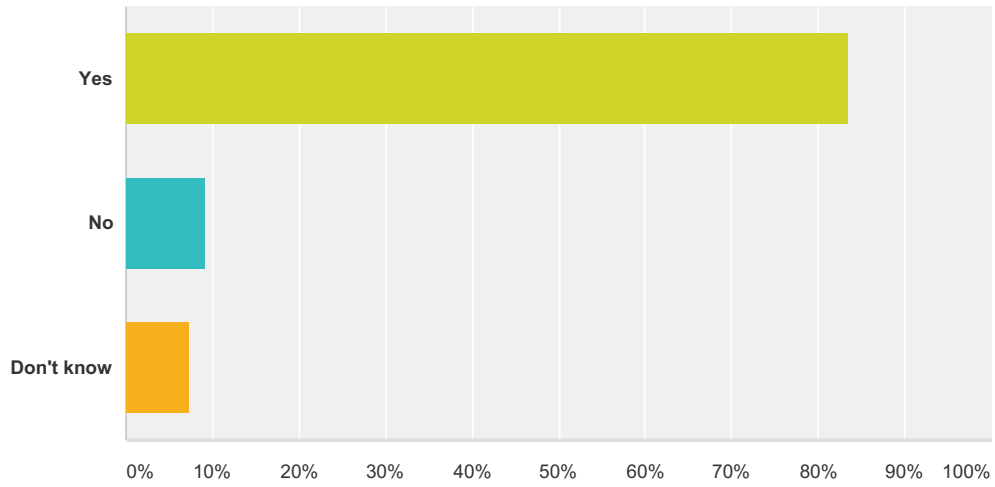
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13	This seems to be the most logical of all the points in the survey, so far. This may encourage certain groups to seek employment to care for their children. I think this group needs the most support and structure to assist them in their job seeking.	7/27/2016 11:07 AM
14	my experience is that people who have children £66.90 for each child. encourages them to have a lot more children and a drain on the council's funding. but I do think it should be 3 children not 2.	7/26/2016 4:10 PM
15	This is unfair and people have rights on to how many children they have. Maybe limit to 3 children as most family's have 3 children this is the average	7/25/2016 5:52 PM
16	It may be unpopular but struggling financially and bringing new life into an increasingly difficult world seems irresponsible. I think two children for a financially struggling family is more than adequate but I do not have a family of my own by choice and I am somewhat biased.	7/25/2016 1:25 PM
17	I only have two children but I dont think benefits should be limited to two as it is very hard financially to bring up children today on benefits especially if you have more than too.	7/24/2016 12:41 PM
18	I think 3 or 4 would greatly reduce the financial burden rather than 2.	7/23/2016 10:52 AM
19	Should only be given the reduction if the children are in a single parent family.	7/22/2016 7:51 PM
20	I think this is totally fair and sensible	7/22/2016 2:02 PM
21	I would not agree to any option that effectively penalises children for their parents being poor.	7/22/2016 1:05 PM
22	Not enough children living in poverty for you?	7/22/2016 12:31 PM
23	As before - option 2	7/22/2016 11:01 AM
24	There are too many families who believe that having more than two children entitles them to more financial support through the benefits system. If a couple want more than two children they should be required to accept some of the financial burden of doing so and not rely on other Council Tax payers.	7/22/2016 10:02 AM
25	it seems fair as it will apply to all other benefits	7/22/2016 9:24 AM
26	Too many people have too many kids.	7/21/2016 3:29 PM

Agenda Item 5  
**Option 8: Exclude foreign nationals with limited immigration status  
 (persons from abroad) from receiving Council Tax Reduction**

**Q10 Do you think that Option 8 should be introduced into the Council  
 Tax Reduction Scheme for 2017/18?**

Answered: 163 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	83.44%	136
No	9.20%	15
Don't know	7.36%	12
<b>Total</b>		<b>163</b>

#	If you have any comments to make on Option 8, please give them below.	Date
1	Yes as people seem to have more children to have more benefits which is not right	9/29/2016 12:47 PM
2	Depending on the circumstances, few people do genuinely need help but not every body because that all they come here for.	9/29/2016 12:16 PM
3	Far to many people expect to be able to come and live in Britain and think it is ther right to get benefits while some families who have worked most of their lives struggle to get help	9/29/2016 10:22 AM
4	I think this could cause an increase in homelessness - not good for individuals involved or for society as a whole.	9/16/2016 4:21 PM
5	Good idea as if we cannot look after those born here or immigrants now they need to think twice before coming here ( unless have good jobs lined up already)	9/16/2016 3:50 PM
6	If a person lives in this country, even if it is temporary, their treatment should be dependant on their financial position.	9/8/2016 1:07 PM
7	Definitely.	8/4/2016 4:39 PM
8	This is a definite YES YES YES,if people have NOT contributed to this country they should not get any benefits AT ALL!!	8/3/2016 3:35 PM
9	why should those who have paid into the system pay for those who have not paid into the system. I am sure many come here for that reason!	8/2/2016 3:58 PM
10	Unfair question - impossible to answer such a open and potentially bias blanket question This question sounds very strange ' foreigners with limited immigration status (persons from abroad) ' ??? This question is either designed to route out or insight xenophobia, or its assuming the people who are answering this questionnaire are thick!	7/28/2016 7:30 AM
11	... but with reservations depending on individual need. Perhaps a definite time limit is required. For most people in receipt of council tax benefit this could be the most contentious and emotive of all the points in the survey.	7/27/2016 11:11 AM
12	Far to much money is being dished out to foreign immigrants who come over here to scrounge on our benefit system. they should be exempt and be able to fund themselves. we do not receive anything if we went abroad to other countries so why here.	7/26/2016 4:14 PM

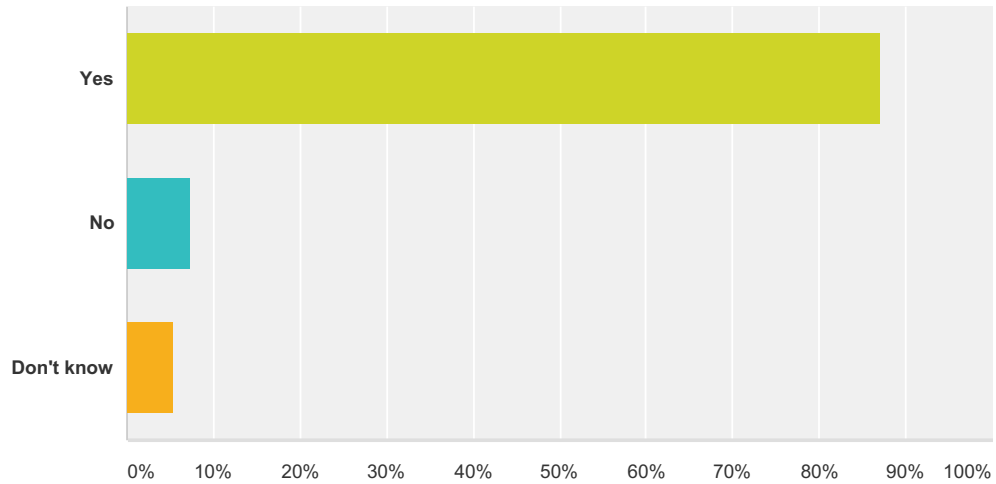
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13	This may need to be limited as maybe (persons from aboard) end up having more rights over the uk residents that need help too	7/25/2016 5:53 PM
14	If they haven't worked in the uk and paid taxes they shouldn't get any benefits	7/25/2016 5:12 PM
15	Foreign nationals with a limited immigration status seems fair but not to foreign nationals to whom full immigration has been confirmed then they should be entitled to all of the benefits available to any British citizen.	7/25/2016 1:29 PM
16	We need to take care of British citizens and that includes anyone with full immigration status. There can only be a certain amount of funds.	7/23/2016 10:55 AM
17	I think anybody working in the UK for a considerable time should receive the same benefits that are available to all. Perhaps this could be available to those who have been working in the UK for at least 6 months?	7/22/2016 5:52 PM
18	I feel you are discriminating. Foreign nationals could be in a relationship with a British settled person so it is unfair	7/22/2016 11:28 AM
19	Although there may not be a large number of foreign nationals with limited immigration status, every bit of money that can be saved is worthwhile.	7/22/2016 10:02 AM

Agenda Item 5  
**Option 9: Introduce a scheme to help claimants suffering exceptional financial hardship**

**Q11 Do you think that Option 9 should be introduced into the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2017/18?**

Answered: 163 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	87.12% 142
No	7.36% 12
Don't know	5.52% 9
<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>

#	If you have any comments to make on option 9, please give them below.	Date
1	Like myself at present	9/29/2016 1:26 PM
2	I struggle greatly to pay my Council Tax on the money I live on	9/29/2016 1:18 PM
3	Again it depends on their circumstances I mean I packed up smoking, drinking takeaways for a few years now and I'm finding it hard most months I did get a cat for company but he costs a small fortune a year I don't even do the lottery so there's no hope of any extra money from that but I don't go without.	9/29/2016 12:20 PM
4	Yes because there are some legitimate cases where through no fault of their own maybe due to illness that they do not have the financial means to pay.	9/29/2016 10:24 AM
5	Helps individuals who most need it!	9/16/2016 4:29 PM
6	Good option as many cannot pay required amounts through no fault of own but at least this would help where needed or some people would be unable to eat properly pay gas, electric, water etc as well as your bills)	9/16/2016 3:52 PM
7	each one should be taken on merit	9/16/2016 2:44 PM
8	Bills will not get paid	9/8/2016 1:08 PM
9	This seems fair and appropriate	9/4/2016 11:10 PM
10	These people should be anyone who has no savings or other financial net. Such as myself who lost my home and everything in the recession but work hard to survive only to have it taken back in council tax and housing benefit. I am 62 and retire soon and live on my own with no way out of getting out of this financial hole and sometime need a break.	8/13/2016 2:23 PM
11	Definitely,some of us are struggling already!!	8/3/2016 3:36 PM
12	Every case is different and the individual should be looked at. We cant fit everything into a tick box method	8/2/2016 3:59 PM



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13	The poorest and most vulnerable are already having any remaining dignity eroded by endlessly having to beg for everything - food from food banks, discretionary housing payments to top up HB, etc etc. Its degrading and soul destroying having to continuously have to fill in forms laying your desperate circumstances bare and feeling like a beggar, and never knowing whether or for how long you'll receive the help.	7/28/2016 7:48 AM
14	you should not do this, every one on low income should still pay there bills out of the money that they get if you have funds to do this you should spread that money across the seven oaks area so everyone get a bit even if it is only pence	7/27/2016 2:38 PM
15	people would have to prove that they are in difficulty over a period of time and only then give the help that they need. So many people now rely on food banks with no fault of their own, but it will have to go through a screening progamme.	7/26/2016 4:19 PM
16	This would help many people especially those who have disability or children with disabilities. As those people are unable to work. Or single parents that don't have a chose in looking after their children, because the father/mother doesn't want to have parental responsibilities	7/25/2016 6:00 PM
17	Some disabled people are really struggling to make ends meet and need all the help they can get	7/25/2016 5:13 PM
18	Yes there should be more help for them that have really small amount of money. some have very little money to live on and have to find money to pay your tax and then have less to feed them selfs on.	7/25/2016 3:41 PM
19	I feel in that in the current climate this will be necessary.	7/25/2016 1:33 PM
20	yes for exceptional cases.	7/24/2016 12:44 PM
21	Each case will no doubt have its pros and cons, but there is always someone who requires special help through a tough period.	7/23/2016 10:57 AM
22	Claimants suffer financial hardship through losing a job/illness/single parent should be helped, other than that its down to budgeting properly.	7/22/2016 7:52 PM
23	Depending on what you mean by 'exceptional financial hardship'	7/22/2016 2:03 PM
24	Definitely people like myself who want to work and do but have to pay most of their wages out on things like rent and bills and council tax suffer	7/22/2016 11:26 AM
25	There will a lot of people who will suffer financial hardship if this goes though	7/22/2016 11:04 AM
26	Essential to prevent real hardship	7/22/2016 11:02 AM
27	I am a single parent of two and had to give up work due to my sons illness, I think this would help a lot of people who are finding paying towards council tax very hard.	7/22/2016 10:32 AM
28	I believe strongly that the Council should assist the individuals, or the families, who are suffering exceptional financial hardship and/or are in receipt Council Tax Reduction. Otherwise they will continue to have financial problems. These are the people who are most in need of support. However, if Option 1 was NOT introduced it would mean that Sevenoaks District Council would not need to introduce a scheme to help claimants suffering exceptional financial hardship and thereby save further costs. I believe strongly that introducing one (or a combination) of Options 3, 4, 5, 7 or 8 should be introduced instead.	7/22/2016 10:02 AM
29	yes because many people have no savings or other income and their level of benefits has not gone up for several years while the money they have to pay out keeps getting more and going up,	7/22/2016 9:29 AM
30	It's good to help people in difficulties, not make it harder for them to live.	7/21/2016 3:32 PM
31	People how are disable and can't should get what pension get as they can't work that is the 100%council tax surport	7/21/2016 2:17 PM

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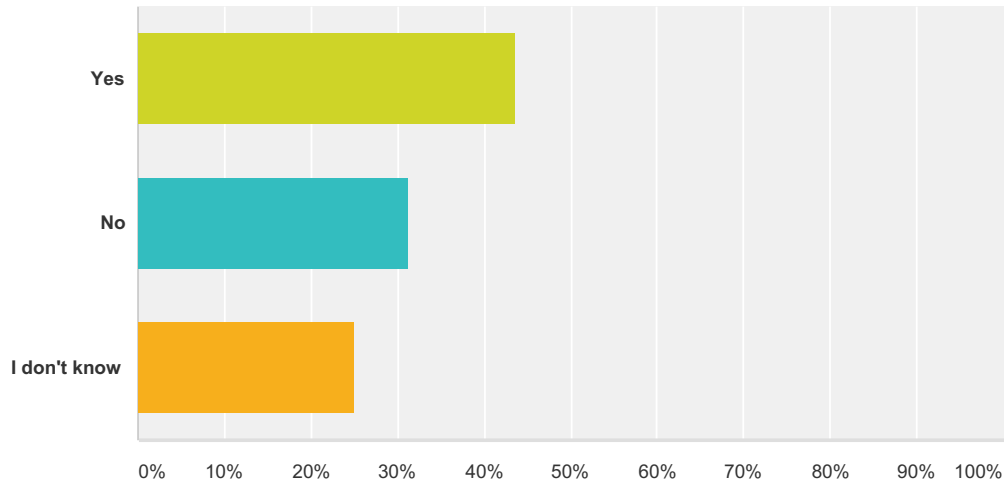
### Q12 If you have any other comments to make on the proposals detailed above, please give them below.

Answered: 16 Skipped: 147

#	Responses	Date
1	All my bills are paid weekly on payment cards and I struggle to pay bills and my council tax. I have no savings or money put by. I live from week to week. I already have financial hardship	9/29/2016 1:18 PM
2	All your proposals (with the exception of option 5 are penalising the poorest people who are already struggling to pay since option 1 was introduced - it reminds me a bit of the poll tax proposal - it is simply unfair. I think you should add a higher tier for people who live in expensive properties and who clearly have the ability to pay. I used to live in social housing property that was banded E - So I had a huge council Tax Bill every year although I was earning well below average salary and only part time. The whole system of council tax is already unfair - don't make it even more punitive!	9/16/2016 4:29 PM
3	I am stunned at the level of support given. Surely a maximum of a 50% reduction in Council Tax bill is appropriate. I fail to see how this level of funding can be sustained or justified in the current economic climate	9/4/2016 11:10 PM
4	There is no good reason to be providing any discount at all to foreigners when we cant even afford Discount for our own people.	9/4/2016 6:43 PM
5	I am a single mum and have 3 children and work part time as a teaching assistant in a church primary school, so am on the minimum wage and struggle to afford everything we need, like so many other people. I rely on the help I receive towards council tax reduction. I do find it unfair that I work over 16 hours ,(and have always worked) as the Government require and bring up my 3 children without any help and yet still there will make further cutbacks and no wage increases.	9/1/2016 2:55 PM
6	I feel there should be some flexibility around the first 6-12 months that a person/family claims council tax relief.	8/30/2016 2:40 PM
7	Benefits should be for helping those who really need it to survive not for those with savings.	8/13/2016 2:23 PM
8	I think you should leave it how it is at the moment and stop giving money to foreign people! Give it to families and cut out this stupid bedroom tax.	8/10/2016 8:42 AM
9	This is far too long, and complex a questionnaire, especially as it claims to be aimed to help those in most need and who are most vulnerable. Many people who most needed to fill it in, in order to give their views, regrettably often won't have been able to complete it sadly!	7/28/2016 7:48 AM
10	Once again, it seems that the disabled and the vulnerable may be used as a means of filling the government s financial pot. Other more abled groups should be researched and encouraged to find and sustain employment, particularly those who have never worked or others who have not paid into the British system.	7/27/2016 11:15 AM
11	so many people are on the breadline I could be one of them. situations can change so quickly if you loose your job cannot pay the mortgage or have a death in the family.	7/26/2016 4:19 PM
12	Instead of cutting necessary financial help from the poor and disabled of Britain in order to save money, stop foreign aid and use the British money to help British citizens.	7/26/2016 3:26 PM
13	I feel that making certain cuts need to be consider seriously. It's ok for the government to make extreme cuts. However it's not them that will be left with the bare minimum to live on. Especially the old, people with disabilities, single parents like myself that don't have no choice.	7/25/2016 6:00 PM
14	Next year I may very well be one of those claiming extreme financial hardship. I may not be. I hope I won't be but the way things are going at the moment, it would seem very likely. So you can understand that I am very much in favour of this proposal.	7/25/2016 1:33 PM
15	Council should publicly state to its residents that they are asking Government for more money as Theresa May prime minister said she wanted more equality, making people pay what they cannot afford is not equality	7/22/2016 9:29 AM
16	I would like the letter sent to be addressed to both people living at the property. The letter was sent to the male at the property. He does not respond to surveys and this would have ended up in the bin. Other people live here also who want a say. Or is it intended to be send to male only respondents?	7/21/2016 3:32 PM

**Q13 Should the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2017/18 be exactly the same as our 2016/17 scheme?**

Answered: 163 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	43.56% 71
No	31.29% 51
I don't know	25.15% 41
<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>

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### Q14 Please tell us the reasons for wanting to protect or to change the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Answered: 72 Skipped: 91

#	Responses	Date
1	as stated on previous pages in this survey I struggle greatly to pay my council tax as it is any increase would be unexceptable and I would not be able to pay it.	9/29/2016 1:23 PM
2	I think it would benefit our local council to apply the same restriction that exists in other stste benefits to our foreign nationals	9/29/2016 12:57 PM
3	More help should be given if you suffer loss due to death as I pay out more with less coming in	9/29/2016 12:52 PM
4	Clearly some change has to be made to help pay the shortfall	9/29/2016 12:34 PM
5	Its hard enough with all the cutbacks but something has to be done. Maybe look at staff salaries at the top end of the wage bill. If not already done, freeze pay rises for a while.	9/29/2016 12:22 PM
6	I couldn't afford to pay more	9/29/2016 11:50 AM
7	If savings ned to be found this may be the better option	9/29/2016 11:46 AM
8	I would like to make the observation that as current ESA claimants have to reapply every 3 years at least. Existing claimants are forced to become new claimants even if awarded another 3 years. I realise things need to change but disabled people and children should be protected without having to be accountable for every penny they spend by having to complete a budget as indiscretionary housing benefit which is paid by government for me but cannot get because I cant leave my adapted home with extra bedroom. I am prepared to pay a bit more council tax as option 1 but have a lot of extra living costs so would need this to be a small amount of claimants with children already get penalised in claims and housing benefits creating poverty for innocent children who already existed before change in benefit. Not everyone is responsible for their circumstances when they find they have to claim benefit	9/29/2016 11:36 AM
9	It seems that some changes are more acceptable	9/29/2016 10:37 AM
10	I fulfil all requirements made by the Government, working over 16 hours, bringing up 3 children alone with no help and yet still reductions are being made and no wage increases, so where will this extra money come from?	9/29/2016 10:28 AM
11	See previous comments	9/16/2016 4:35 PM
12	Well we could change the government and have one that taxes these with plenty of money to spare instead of the poor and desperate! Seriously I do not know how you can make decisions as the whole scheme is questionable. We need local services, care homes and help the elderly, ill disabled etc etc but....	9/16/2016 3:58 PM
13	Things change so quickly to comment that for ahead	9/16/2016 2:45 PM
14	Change is good and we all need to work together as a community to help everyone	9/11/2016 10:21 AM
15	It protects the most vulnerable.	9/9/2016 12:51 PM
16	Benefit claimants should be free from Council tax as they were before Mr Nasty changed it.	9/8/2016 1:16 PM
17	I think I've made it clear that the current scheme is over-generous in my opinion	9/4/2016 11:12 PM
18	I work hard and pay full amount of c.tax. there are too many People out there that are not being forced into work because for too long the Government has given them too much. Take away benefits And job seekers after 3 months and watch them trying to get a job when there's no money coming in.	9/4/2016 6:50 PM
19	I guess something needs to b changed if u need to find more money but I also don't want to be left short myself from some of the changes or taking money from somewhere else I might need! It's a hard decision but I do no other people are making it hard 4 us honest hard working single parents ! My home is a high tax band and I never chose this house in peticular it was all I could find quick if it goes up ill struggle even more even with support! It will just go round in circles.	9/4/2016 1:15 PM
20	As I previously mentioned I fulfil all the Governments requirements working part time and bringing up three children on my own and still reductions are being considered to make life even more difficult as my wages do not increase to cover the shortfall.	9/1/2016 3:03 PM

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21	Regarding the options below it is difficult for a resident, having no access to details, to say whether or not there are savings to be made from other Council services but they should be considered and perhaps they have been? Increasing council tax for all by a small amount is an option if those receiving relief are those in greatest need. Taking more from that group may not be the answer when for others paying a small amount more is not a hardship. I would be interested to know why the costs that are covered by council tax increase each year when many employed people in the country are on salaries that have not for many years.	8/30/2016 2:49 PM
22	Can't afford to pay anymore on low income	8/17/2016 5:06 PM
23	Only people in real need claim it.	8/14/2016 9:59 AM
24	Reduce the savings before dishing out benefits.	8/13/2016 2:32 PM
25	Definitely.	8/7/2016 11:13 PM
26	People depend on this especially if there sick or disabled. Stopping it will enforce hardship on those family's who are forced to pay council tax and will more likely turn to crime to make ends meet. Council tax is already grossly over priced to help pay for council workers pensions. If people cant afford it, they wont pay.	8/7/2016 10:32 PM
27	I feel somethings need to change however it needs to be done extremely carefully to still provide enough support for families and not encourage more poverty. I strongly agree with reducing the back dating from 6 months to 1 month, reducing the time frame of 13 weeks to 4 weeks for anyone leaving the uk and for cut back on freign nationals.	8/6/2016 10:19 AM
28	It should either remain at this level or below if anything as its a lot to contribute on a small income.	8/4/2016 4:42 PM
29	There appear to be savings there which will not incur undue hardship (like backdating only a month and reducing time abroad to one month only).	8/4/2016 4:35 PM
30	Protect the current scheme. Most people receiving council tax reduction are already struggling. To penalise them further is hard.	8/4/2016 1:56 PM
31	No because if u have to make savings in this area then there are options,the most prominent option for me is to stop giving money to people who have not contributed to this country!! Its so not fair when you have worked and supported the uk!!	8/3/2016 3:43 PM
32	Reduce savings elsewhere	8/1/2016 2:53 PM
33	Money is tight for people who pay bedroom tax and council tax at the moment. Help needs to be available for hardship. Maybe not charge these people council tax then you wouldnt have to help them through hardship. There must be other services that are chargeable, i.e. events, entertainment. No more free black bags	7/30/2016 11:04 AM
34	Or improved apon! To benefit of the poorest and most vulnerable in the community. Additional income should be sought from the wealthiest, instead of continually trying to erode the already meger means of the poorest!	7/28/2016 8:09 AM
35	I believe it should be altered to reflect individual circumstances and to keep up with changing government guidelines.	7/27/2016 4:32 PM
36	you need to do what ever it takes so that it is fare to all that live in the seven oaks area	7/27/2016 2:41 PM
37	The disabled, vulnerable and elderly need to be protected, as should people who have worked and paid into the system. Perhaps it needs to be tightened up, to reflect the views of the general population. Sensitive but maybe needed.	7/27/2016 11:22 AM
38	you have to find a happy medium to benefit all. some people just do not want to work. tax credits are their to help those who are in desperate need, not to give to them without due need.or abuse the system. I think the new system will work well.	7/26/2016 4:33 PM
39	The amount the poor pay in Council Tax should be reduced, not increased, and not stay the same as it is already too much for them to afford with the little they get and have to pay out already on utilities and food.	7/26/2016 3:31 PM
40	We don't get increases in our benefits so don't reduce the council tax scheme.	7/26/2016 11:25 AM
41	The council should not be focusing on the poorest members of the society who would suffer the most by the changes proposed.	7/26/2016 9:31 AM
42	I'm very grateful for the help I get a present	7/25/2016 6:03 PM
43	when the Government give you a little more money to live on each year then this is not a bad thing but to ask to have more money off of us when the money did not go up this year at all from the Government how the hell are we meant to give you more money ? some of us find it hard to pay what we are paying now and others have 3 or 4 kids and get other money come in and there still paying less then we are.	7/25/2016 3:47 PM
44	This would be preferable but with some minor adjustments such as the ones I ticked yest to in my other answers. This is a workable system and one where I have been able to meet the requirements with minimum stress. I'm afraid I don't handle excess stress very well and even the notification of these proposed changes has started giving me sleepless nights and pulsating headaches.	7/25/2016 1:43 PM

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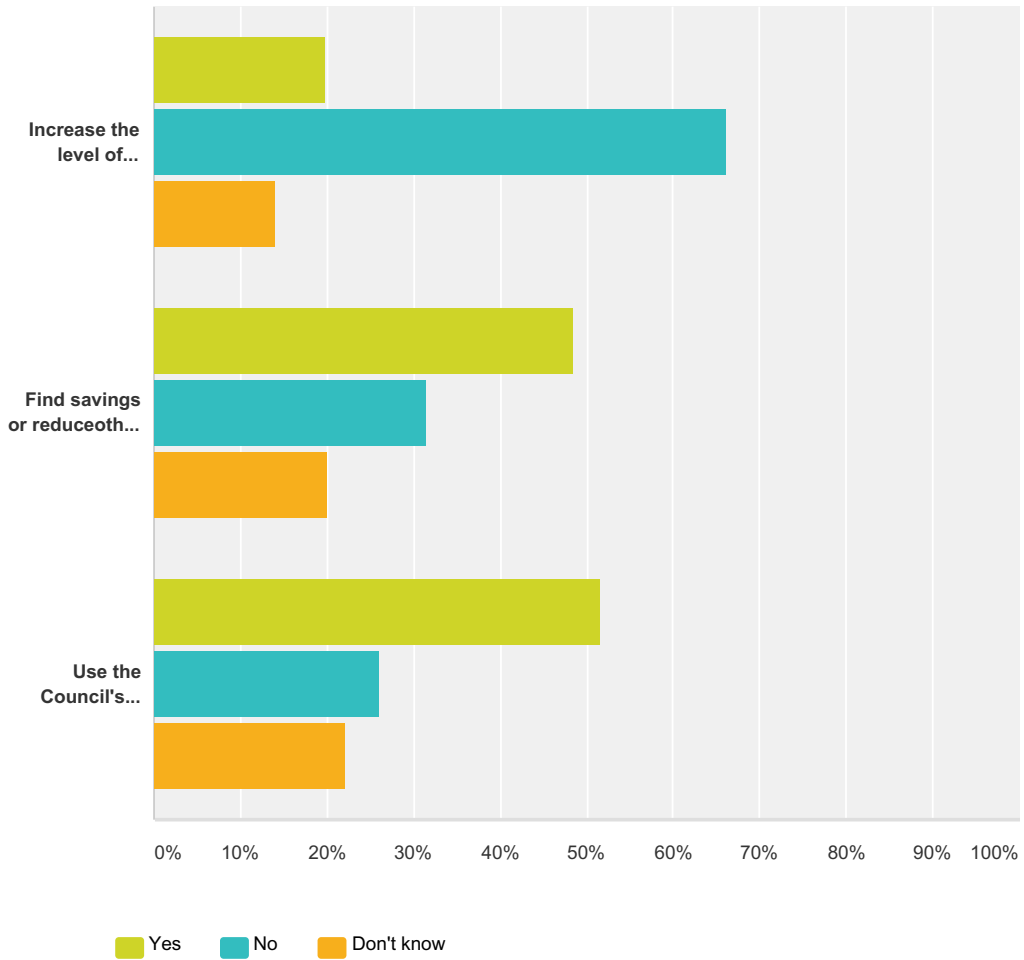
45	Each individual element of the survey needs to be looked at upon its merits eg, if a working age person is unable to work they should not have more children until they are able to support them	7/25/2016 12:28 PM
46	low income families are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet. People may have a low income because of other reasons i.e. disabilities, being a carer, etc. Bills are going up and wages/benefits are not going up at the same rate. Some peoples circumstances are genuine and they need help.	7/25/2016 11:27 AM
47	Shouldn't be changed it works well now	7/25/2016 10:06 AM
48	Makes a big difference to me due to disability	7/24/2016 4:19 PM
49	if you can make small reduction across the board option 1 is better than increasing council tax and taking from other services.	7/24/2016 12:52 PM
50	We will be leaving the area and moving to Durham. Therefore these changes will not affect us.	7/23/2016 2:04 PM
51	The scheme may need changing depending what is going on in 2017/18	7/23/2016 1:56 PM
52	I cant think of any services that we should loose in our district. this does seem the fairest way forward	7/23/2016 11:00 AM
53	I don't think people who are out of the country for 13 weeks a year should get council tax reduction	7/23/2016 10:35 AM
54	Human reaction is never positive where change is concerned given uncertainty invokes fear. However, if funding is restricted then it is essential to make reasonable cuts, avoiding adverse impact on the vulnerable in society and causing society itself to fragment / disengage.	7/23/2016 4:36 AM
55	If our generous government would stop funding overseas aid that are already funded by well known charities than more funding would be available. More money needs to be spent on hiring people for compliance to root out the people who rent council homes (whilst having a private home to live in), get secretly married (whilst maintaining they are co habiting) and make multiple benefit claims under different names, and stopping payments of Child Benefit/Child Tax Credit to any family in receipt of over £20,000 per annum.Councils to stop housing illegal immigrants and refugees because a lot of them could be people with ulterior motive, and stop financing the building of mosques and use the money to house the homeless on our streets.	7/22/2016 7:59 PM
56	Wages and income have not gone up for many people so how can people incorporate these reductions into their budget without it effecting essentials like food, clothes and heating.	7/22/2016 5:58 PM
57	to help people who are disabled , inc careers that are unable to get out of their situation , unable to return to work , could there be a service that double checks people are genuine in their claims , could the rubbish service be reduced to fortnightly instead of weekly , stop giving free bin bags, fine people who park on kerbs and pavements which cause untold damage , which also blocks disabled people , people with prams and blind people have to go into the road , what about people who earn over 50 grand per year , surely they should pay full private rent rates or to be forced to vacate their property and allow and more deserving family lastly I understand the council has to make savings , but please don't hammer and reduce disabled and carers into the ground who can't return to work , life is difficult enough as it is , daily pain, getting emotional abuse from the public who think disabled people are scrounging off the state which is soul destroying , I'm a 50 year old man , recently widowed and have puns, screws and p.ages in my back, causing sleeping issues, bladder problems, bad leg due to extensive nerve damage	7/22/2016 5:19 PM
58	I feel given the cuts changes are necessary as long as it doesn't put vulnerable and disabled people in more hardship. If there were no changes I don't know where the extra funds would come from. "From elsewhere"?? I think people with more than 2 children should pay more, also working people. These government cuts have hit disabled and vulnerable people very hard and we have little money as it is.	7/22/2016 2:08 PM
59	If the Council cannot afford to pay for things, it should reduce costs rather than expect people to pay more. I can't be the only person to have noticed that council tax has increased by an average 6% a year over the last 20 years...way higher than inflation and this was going on even before the government reduced funding.	7/22/2016 1:22 PM
60	The change to the reduction scheme does not increase the claimants payment greatly.	7/22/2016 12:45 PM
61	Bring back a Council Tax Benefit.	7/22/2016 12:36 PM
62	People like myself are struggling and suffering to live a decent life the money needs to be found somewhere and why should we be the ones losing out ! I think if the money was cut from the questions I have answered or some at least then maybe there would be some big savings to help struggling families	7/22/2016 11:32 AM
63	Clearly if this is not changed, other services will have to be cut	7/22/2016 11:10 AM
64	because we would be in hardship	7/22/2016 11:08 AM
65	If these schemes come into force I fear that this will affect a lot of families that are already finding it hard to live on the low income they have. This would push them even further into the poor basket	7/22/2016 10:35 AM

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66	I believe strongly that if the Council tax Reduction Scheme was removed it would cause the individuals, or the families, who are in receipt this Council Tax Support financial problems. These are the people who are most in need of support. I believe that if the maximum level of Council Tax Support was reduced (again) it would become a 'slippery slope' with every year, or couple of years, it being reduced further. If Option 1 was NOT introduced it would mean that Sevenoaks District Council would not need to introduce a scheme to help claimants suffering exceptional financial hardship and thereby save further costs. I believe strongly that introducing one (or a combination) of Options 3, 4, 5, 7 or 8 should be introduced instead.	7/22/2016 10:03 AM
67	because we cannot afford to keep paying out when our ESA remains the same as previous years	7/22/2016 9:33 AM
68	The change being proposed is a minimal one and if this stops any further council tax rises and any other service cuts then it is a better option	7/21/2016 7:12 PM
69	Ask someone in receipt of council tax benefit due to ill health and unable to work. I wouldn't be able to afford a large increase. I already pay £27 per month due to the bedroom tax and it's a struggle. I have 1 "spare room" but it's for my daughter who I have at weekends through a court order.	7/21/2016 5:06 PM
70	It depends on what the other affected options would be.	7/21/2016 1:34 PM
71	Savings will need to be made and if funds are needed it should be sourced from financially stable areas.The Government has constantly protected high tax bracket earners these are the people who should be asked for the funds.People who are living in large properties without money worries should be the ones to help. Asking people already struggling to yet again find more money without any increase in income to balance the extra costs is exactly what this foul Government has been doing for many years.	7/21/2016 11:43 AM
72	I think people on low income/benefit should receive as much help as possible as I myself have only CTC and a low income from my job. I am a single parent (not through my own making) of 4 children aged 14, 13, 12 and 5 years. Its a constant to survive never mind feed and clothe my children, it was much easier when there was no council tax to pay as with Housing Benefit. However, I do not think people from other countries should receive benefits. This is not a racist view, I just think that only people with the means to support themselves should be allowed to migrate to a country that is stretched to its limits already and is having to support so many people who can't find suitable employment. I worked for nearly 30 years before finding myself in a situation where I had to stop full time work and now am struggling to find another job to make up the hours to provide a decent life for my children. Other countries don't take anyone who has no trade or means of self supporting, we should adopt these rules in Britain. Rant over!	7/21/2016 11:07 AM

### Q15 To protect the Council Tax Reduction Scheme from further cuts the Council should...

Answered: 163 Skipped: 0

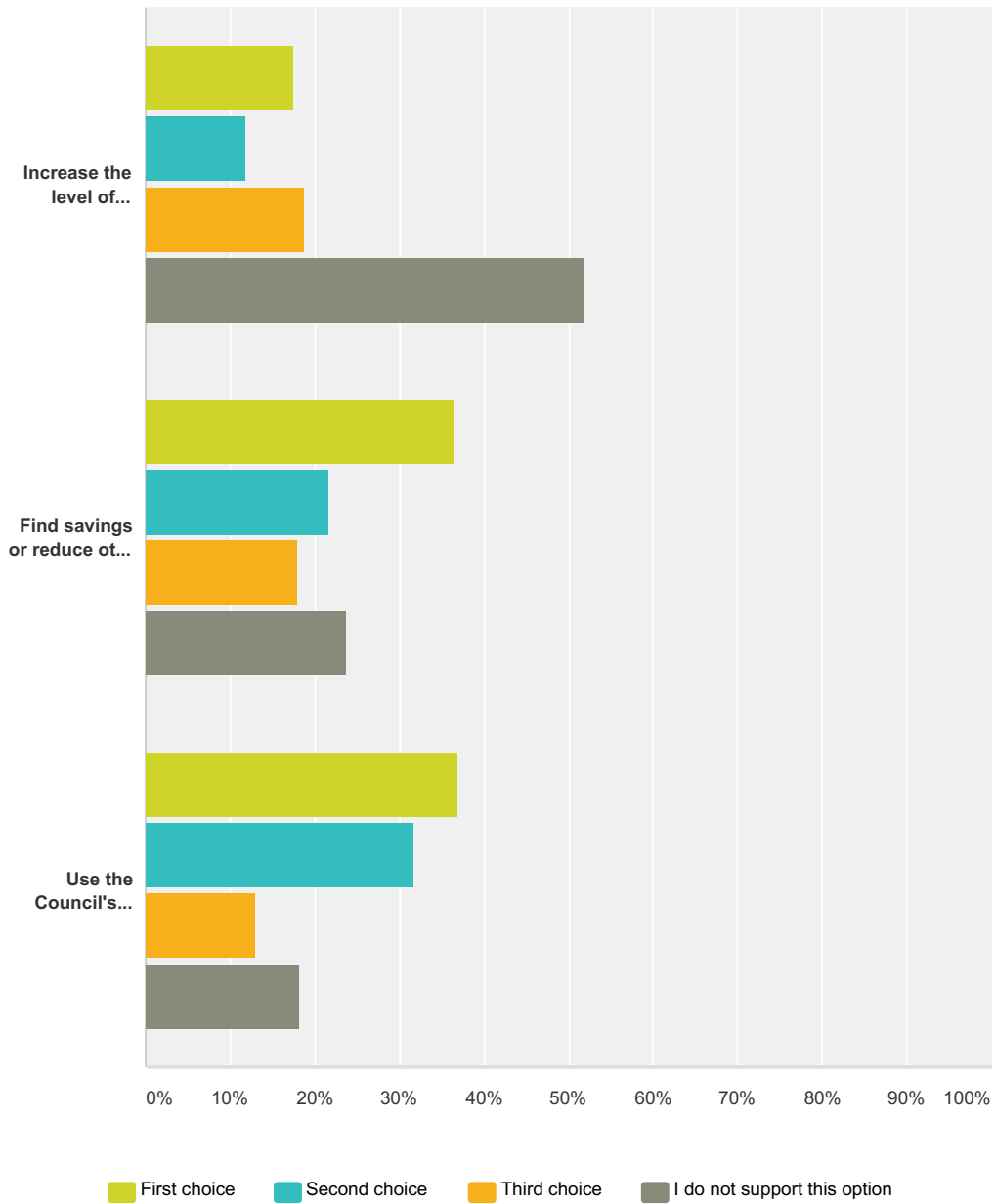


	Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Increase the level of Council Tax	19.87% 30	66.23% 100	13.91% 21	151
Find savings or reduce other Council services	48.39% 75	31.61% 49	20.00% 31	155
Use the Council's reserves (savings)	51.63% 79	26.14% 40	22.22% 34	153



**Q16 Based on your answers above, please rank the following in order of preference**

Answered: 162 Skipped: 1



	First choice	Second choice	Third choice	I do not support this option	Total
Increase the level of council tax	17.50% 28	11.88% 19	18.75% 30	51.88% 83	160
Find savings or reduce other Council services	36.54% 57	21.79% 34	17.95% 28	23.72% 37	156
Use the Council's reserves (savings)	37.01% 57	31.82% 49	12.99% 20	18.18% 28	154

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### Q17 If you would like us to consider any other options, please give your comments below.

Answered: 25 Skipped: 138

#	Responses	Date
1	Fining people who leave dog waste	9/29/2016 12:52 PM
2	Save money by contacting doctor for medical information	9/29/2016 11:46 AM
3	See previous comments	9/16/2016 4:35 PM
4	Lobbying government for more support as I disagree with how we treat people in this country, who need help ( Children, elderly poor etc)	9/16/2016 3:58 PM
5	Central Government should use the money saved from Common Market membership. Stop squeezing the poor	9/8/2016 1:16 PM
6	It would be an insult to me if my c.tax were increased to help the scroungers have their reduction. What an awkward question to ask the people who are already paying £1200+ every year!! However as you have asked this question to everyone all the people benefiting from the reduction will choose this option. A disgrace!!	9/4/2016 6:50 PM
7	Single people struggle more than couple due to utilities expenses. Consider this when they ask for help. Usually single women having been brought up in the 50's/60's who struggle to work until retirement age due to lack of fitness.	8/13/2016 2:32 PM
8	Sack more over payed council officials and senior management. Cut there pensions and stop wasteing money.	8/7/2016 10:32 PM
9	Reduce staff and improve efficiencies in back office processes	8/1/2016 2:53 PM
10	Increase the highest levels of council tax to premiere properties. Develop a fairer local form of Income Taxation, to replacing Council Tax. This would ensure that EVERYONE paid according to their means.	7/28/2016 8:09 AM
11	This cannot be answered without more information ie increase level to what? Reduce what services? Not enough details.	7/27/2016 11:22 AM
12	try to find ways to save money on child benefit. Not to give endless benefit to foreign people. reduce the number of council workers who are idle and do not put in the work. streamline all unnessaccary staff.	7/26/2016 4:33 PM
13	Stop foreign aid and spend this on British Citizens	7/26/2016 3:31 PM
14	reduce the number of councillors and save on the wages bill	7/26/2016 1:12 PM
15	I do feel it work ok as it is now. I am grateful for all the help I received from Sevenoaks district council	7/25/2016 6:03 PM
16	Stop paying the big boss men the high wage and then use that money to help them that need the help in the first place.	7/25/2016 3:47 PM
17	perhaps cut whole benefit system to those that have never paid into the UK tax system less than 5 years	7/25/2016 11:27 AM
18	Reduce the annual wages of management and executives.	7/23/2016 12:04 PM
19	Consider changing the structure or delivery of other services to achieve savings, rather than simply cutting the funding budget - which will effect the quality and availability of that service.	7/23/2016 4:36 AM
20	39. Stop providing free food and drink for meetings: DCLG has cut spending on refreshments for meetings from £456,142 in 2009-10 to £32,053 in 2011-12. Guidance to staff now states that refreshments may only be ordered for meetings with external attendees of longer than four hours. Staff should avoid arranging meetings over lunchtime where possible and attendees should normally be asked to bring their own refreshments where practical. Expensive meals on Government Procurement Cards have also been stopped. <sup>65</sup> Also, ban mineral water at council meetings: Tap water in refillable bottles costs nothing and is better for the environment. Manchester council cut 90% in two years off its £93,000 bottled mineral water bill. <sup>66</sup> 40. Reduce first class travel: Previously DCLG spent £200,000 a year on first class rail travel in 2009-10; under the new Administration, such spending has been cut to just £17,500 a year in 2011-12. <sup>67</sup> 41. Cut mileage payments: Councils paid out £427 million in mileage allowances in 2009-10. <sup>68</sup> The HMRC Approved Mileage Allowance Payment is currently 45 pence per mile. Some council employees are on terms and conditions where they can able to claim up to 25p per mile more than the prevailing HMRC rate. Councils could cut the mileage rates back to HMRC levels, which North East Lincolnshire has done. <sup>69</sup> DCLG only gives out HMRC rates. 42. Video conference instead of travel: South Tyneside Council is embracing the latest video conferencing technology to reduce travel costs. The equipment will also generate income for the council who plan	7/22/2016 5:58 PM
21	I'm baffled as to how increasing the level of council tax would 'help' with council tax reduction...as it would just increase the amount payable by anyone claiming a reduction.	7/22/2016 1:22 PM

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22	I believe strongly that are a vast number of very wealthy pensioners living within Sevenoaks District Council who could afford to not be in receipt of any support towards their Council Tax. There should be more done to make them pay more.	7/22/2016 10:03 AM
23	yes if you use all your reserves and are not seen as a rich council you will get more from Government in rate support grant	7/22/2016 9:33 AM
24	Why not reduce council top salaries? Some are earning more than Mrs T May?	7/21/2016 3:34 PM
25	Only give benefit to British national	7/21/2016 11:07 AM

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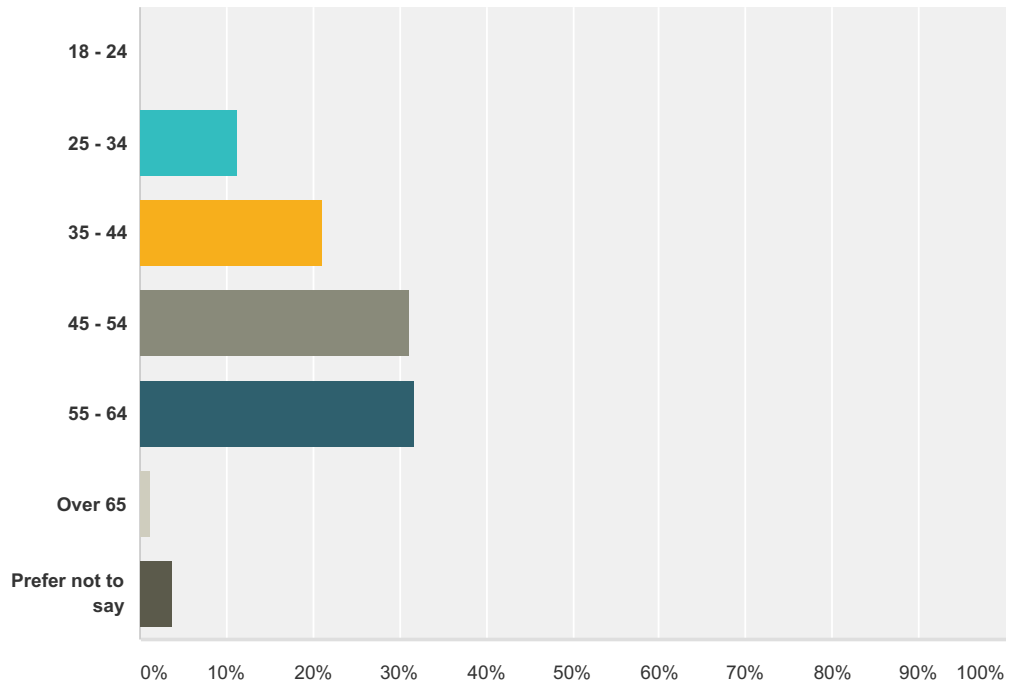
### Q18 If you have any further comments to make regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme that you haven't had opportunity to raise elsewhere, please give them below.

Answered: 12 Skipped: 151

#	Responses	Date
1	Paying for all refuse sacks or the recycle sacks they deliver to us it would may save money	9/29/2016 1:28 PM
2	The only comment I have to make as I have previously listed in this survey I have real financial hardship and very limited money to live on every two weeks on ESA to pay my bills on payment cards. I have no savings or shares. I liver from hand to mouth on my money since paying council tax. I have even more distress and hardship which greatly effects my serious and ongoing health	9/29/2016 1:23 PM
3	Save money on charging people for fly tipping	9/29/2016 12:52 PM
4	I think the current system of Council Tax charges are unfair - it is based on value of home not income and therefore doesn't calculate ability to pay especially for those working including part time. If a person has a large family and lives in large rented property (not even owned) they have to pay a disproportionally amount of Council Tax - simply unfair, as previously described. Please do take my comments on board. Thank you	9/16/2016 4:35 PM
5	I don't see reducing services further as good idea. Government cuts are problem as I don't see money squandered - where?!	9/16/2016 3:58 PM
6	I dont think we get enough help as it is with the council tax reduction at 81%	8/3/2016 3:43 PM
7	a bit of a mind field! I am sure nothing could ideally be cut, we just need to be sensible, looking at the picture as a whole and the knock on effect this may have on other resources	8/2/2016 4:01 PM
8	Most importantly, reverse the trend of always hitting on the poorest and most vulnerable, first, last and always! It's time for change!!!	7/28/2016 8:09 AM
9	I wish you well with the new scheme.	7/26/2016 4:33 PM
10	Charge the richest in our community much more, and do not charge the poor atall.	7/26/2016 3:31 PM
11	Obviously finding efficiency savings would be very much the best way to go - but not by cutting services.	7/22/2016 11:10 AM
12	Address the letter to all occupants at the house not just one person. I pay the rates not the person, its addressed to. I have to find the money each month from somewhere!	7/21/2016 3:34 PM

### Q19 Age

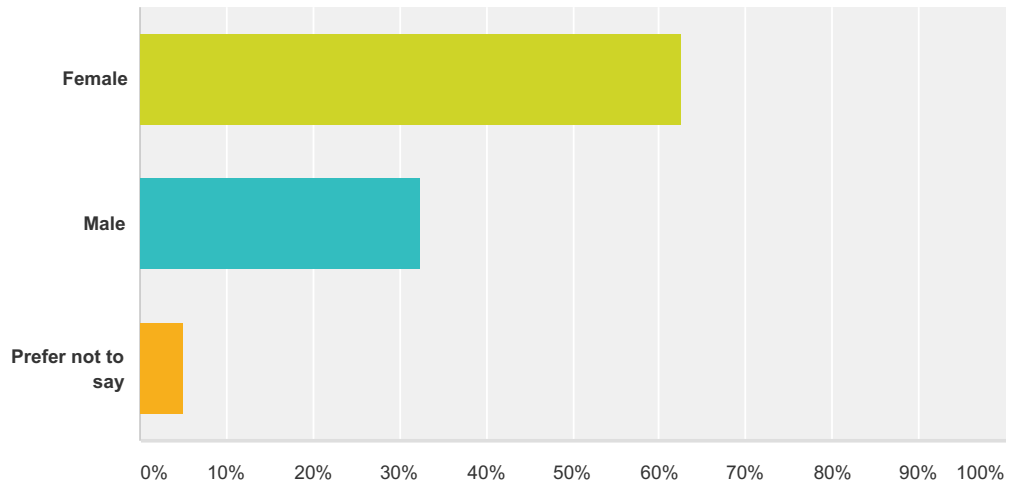
Answered: 161 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses	
18 - 24	0.00%	0
25 - 34	11.18%	18
35 - 44	21.12%	34
45 - 54	31.06%	50
55 - 64	31.68%	51
Over 65	1.24%	2
Prefer not to say	3.73%	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>161</b>

### Q20 Gender

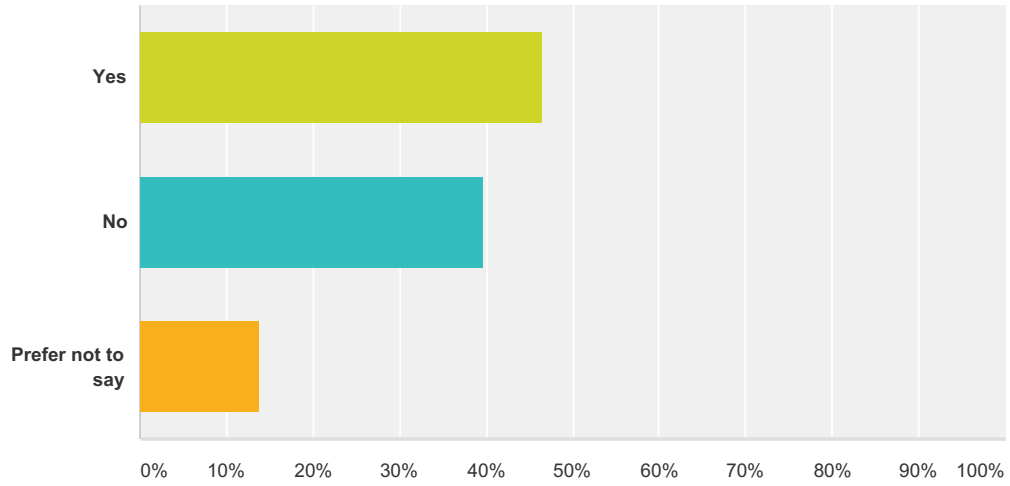
Answered: 158 Skipped: 5



Answer Choices	Responses
Female	62.66% 99
Male	32.28% 51
Prefer not to say	5.06% 8
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>

**Q21 Disability** Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

Answered: 159 Skipped: 4

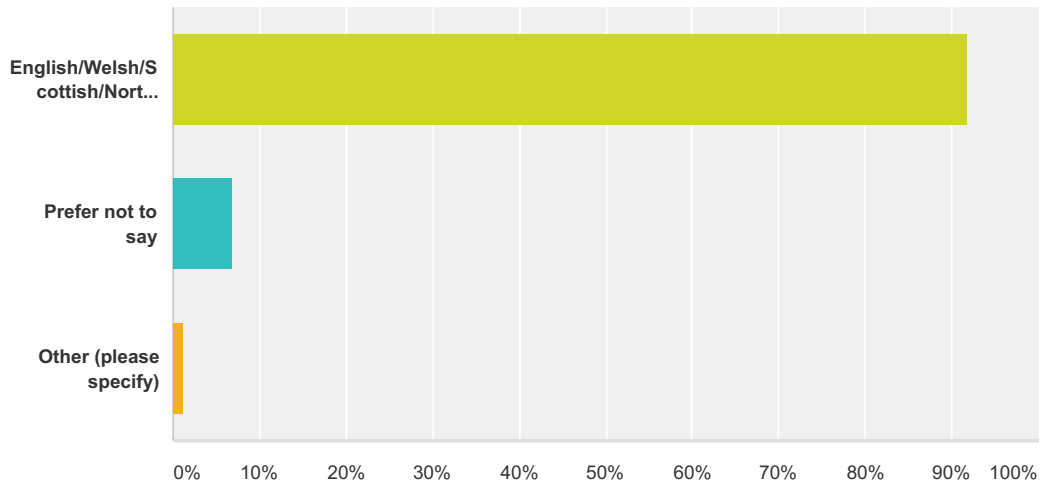


Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	46.54%	74
No	39.62%	63
Prefer not to say	13.84%	22
<b>Total</b>		<b>159</b>

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## Q22 Race

Answered: 158 Skipped: 5



Answer Choices	Responses
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	91.77% 145
Prefer not to say	6.96% 11
Other (please specify)	1.27% 2
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	Polish	7/22/2016 6:39 PM
2	human being	7/21/2016 3:34 PM



Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member

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West  
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Kent Finance Officers

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This response is to the consultation about changes to your local council tax reduction (CTR) scheme. The response is on behalf of Kent County Council which is a statutory consultee on local schemes.

I would like to emphasise at the outset that KCC fully appreciates the close working relationship between district councils and major preceptors, and the efforts that districts make to maximise the council tax base and council tax collection. This excellent relationship and appreciation of district council efforts was noted at a recent meeting of KCC's Policy and Resources committee and once again I would like to formally endorse this.

We are disappointed that this consultation has not been set in the wider context of the financial challenge for local authorities. Responsibility for council tax support transferred from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to local authorities. The initial transfer came in 2013 with a 10% reduction in funding which went into revenue support grant (RSG) and the baseline for the local share of business rates. The majority of the funding was transferred into RSG and has not been protected from the cuts since 2013 or further reductions planned for future years. Whilst the original schemes were financially neutral to compensate for the initial 10% reduction they have not kept pace with the further reductions in RSG. We would not necessarily expect continued financial neutrality to be feasible in light of the scale of RSG reductions, but we would expect more acknowledgement of the impact on other council services and council tax payers as part of the consultation on local reduction schemes. We have consistently made this point to Kent Finance Officers and are disappointed that consultation does not refer to this vitally important context.

We intend to make the same general response to each district covering the following issues:

- Possible protection for existing schemes
- Extent to which working age households should be asked to pay a greater share of council tax
- Changes in the calculation of qualifying income to determine council tax reductions
- Other adjustments to council tax reductions to reflect individual household circumstances
- Other possible changes to council tax outside reduction schemes
- Alternatives to reviewing CTR schemes

### *Protection for Existing Schemes*

In light of the financial challenge to local authorities through RSG reductions we cannot support protecting existing schemes and some changes are needed to reduce the cost of council tax support discounts and/or increase the council tax base. Whilst KCC recognises that not protecting existing schemes could have an impact on some vulnerable households this should be compensated by making other adjustments to schemes rather than applying blanket protection. Schemes need to evolve to take account of changing circumstances and in particular the reality of on-going reductions in central government funding to local authorities.

### *Reducing Council Tax Reduction Discounts*

KCC supports the principle of reducing CTR discounts although it is difficult to conclude precisely what % should apply. The changes in the funding arrangements mean there is no straightforward mathematical equation which can be applied along the same lines as the original 18.5%. However, in light of the scale of RSG reductions KCC would have liked to have seen some consideration of even lower CTR discounts as part of the consultation (particularly those authorities that have only consulted on a very small change of 1.5% in contribution). We feel that only proposing one slightly lower rate of discount limits the room for manoeuvre and could end up with even more districts in Kent offering different discount rates rather than the harmonisation of rates we were hoping for.

KCC recognises that reducing CTR discounts is the simplest response to on-going reductions in central government funding. Whilst the council recognises this will be an additional burden for households it is important that schemes are regularly reviewed to ensure they take into account the impact of the financial challenge arising from additional spending demands and reductions in central funding, and that all council tax payers are asked to make a reasonable contribution towards the cost of local services. KCC would like to see a more consistent approach adopted in all districts in Kent and that schemes bear a close resemblance to schemes elsewhere across the country. However, the council also recognises the need to keep schemes flexible to reflect local circumstances. KCC would like to see all Kent districts make progress towards arrangements which collectively increase the council tax base closer towards the implied central funding but recognises that a financially neutral equation is unlikely to be possible or desirable.

*Changes to the Calculation of Qualifying Income*

The income of the main council tax payer (and their partner) is a key factor in determining which households qualify for CTR discount. KCC fully supports the proposals on a minimum income level for self-employed and the changes to Work-Related Activity in ESA. KCC would also support the principle of changing CTR schemes to be consistent with changes in housing benefit, Universal Credit and other welfare benefits in future. In particular the county council would not want to see a situation where CTR schemes offered additional council tax support as a result of government decisions to reduce or limit welfare benefits. The county council would like to see an automatic adjustment to schemes to ensure they are in line with welfare changes, through a trigger mechanism. If this is not a national condition (currently not) we would like to see this as a condition built into all Kent district schemes.

KCC rejects any inclusion of child benefit in household income for CTR schemes. Including child benefit as household income would be contrary to the council's strategic objectives to help children and young people to get the best start in life and to help vulnerable residents. KCC would support more research being undertaken into the impact of including child maintenance in household income. In particular the council can see some merit in exploring including higher levels of child maintenance above a reasonable threshold, provided this does not act as a perverse incentive to reduce or restrict child maintenance awards/agreements. KCC does not agree that child maintenance be included until this research has been fully evaluated.

*Other Adjustments to the Calculation of CTR Discounts*

This is undoubtedly the most complex area of CTR schemes. We believe these adjustments can best be summarised under 4 main categories:

- Allowances for dependent children and other non-dependent adults
- Allowances for exceptional hardship and household savings
- Capping CTR discounts
- Other adjustments

Dependent Children and Non-Dependent Adults

Currently there are two adjustments made to CTR discounts based on increasing the discount through an addition for dependent children. The first is the addition of a Family Premium for all households with one or more children other than those whose sole income comes from welfare benefits (Universal Credit, Income Support, JSA, ESA). Most districts are considering whether this premium should be removed to bring CTR into line with housing benefit calculations. The second adjustment relates to families whose sole income is from welfare benefits. Currently household income for these families is effectively increased by £66.90 per dependent child. Most districts are considering capping this addition to a maximum of two children. This would bring CTR schemes in line with housing benefit, Universal Credit and tax credits as announced in the Chancellor's summer 2015 Budget.

KCC's supports the proposals on changes to Family Premium and Dependent Children adjustments. We fully support the principle of changing CTR schemes to be consistent with changes in housing benefit, Universal Credit and other welfare benefits. Although these changes would on the face of it be contrary to the county council's strategic

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priorities the council believes that the overriding factor is consistency with other welfare benefit changes. This alignment with other welfare benefits should be consistent in all Kent district schemes.

Currently an adjustment is made for other non-dependent adults in the household based on individual circumstances (those earning income but not liable to pay the council tax or their partner). These adjustments can reduce CTR discounts by up to £11.45 a week. Most districts are considering introducing a standard adjustment for all non-dependent adults irrespective of individual circumstances. These deductions range for £10 a week to £15 a week in individual districts.

KCC fully supports standardising deductions for non-dependent adults. This would make schemes simpler and cheaper to administer as well as reducing the impact of CTR discounts on the tax base. We would like to see more authorities consider a higher standard rate than the current £11.45 a week although we recognise some differences may be necessary to reflect local circumstances in individual districts.

### Allowances for Exceptional Hardship and Household Savings

133 authorities (out of a total of 285 authorities which have introduced local CTR schemes) operate a hardship fund. Currently none of the Kent districts offer such a scheme. We do not have any information how these schemes operate, how much they cost, nor how many households receive additional assistance. Most Kent districts are considering whether they should adopt hardship scheme. Once again we have no detail of what sort of schemes they are considering. In particular districts have not identified a value for a fund (and whether it would be capped), or how it would be funded e.g. would it be offset against tax base/collection fund or would it be part of the district's general fund.

KCC supports the principle of a hardship fund to help families that face exceptional financial difficulties. However, we would need to see further proposals from districts over how such a scheme would operate e.g. which circumstances would trigger support, how the scheme would be funded, and financial modelling of the number of households which may receive financial assistance, before we could agree to the inclusion of any scheme. In particular we would like to see how beneficiaries would be supported to address their financial difficulties so that they do not need further support or default on future council tax demands. Until we have sight of these details it is difficult to make a definitive response to the consultation.

Currently households with savings and investments in excess of £16,000 cannot qualify for any CTR discount. This is consistent with other welfare benefits. 86 authorities (out of 285) have reduced this threshold to £10,000 or £6,000. Most Kent districts are considering making a similar reduction to the savings threshold. KCC supports reducing the savings threshold and accepts that reducing the savings/investment threshold would not present a significant risk of causing financial hardship.

### Capping CTR Discounts

85 authorities (out of 285) currently apply a cap on CTR discounts. These limit the discount on higher banded properties to the amount that a band C or band D property would receive. Most Kent districts are considering introducing capping discounts to the band D amount.

KCC supports capping CTR discounts but proposes that the cap should generally be applied to all properties above band C. Band C is the most common band in Kent and in most districts the majority of properties are band C or lower. We accept that a higher band D cap should only apply in those districts where less than half the properties are band C or lower i.e. Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells. Similarly in any district where the majority of properties are band B or lower we think the cap should apply at band B.

#### Other Adjustments

This includes the length of time claims can be backdated for a change in household circumstances (proposals would reduce this from 6 months to 1 month), time limits on temporary absence from homes without affecting CTR discounts (housing benefit has now been changed so that if a person is absent from Great Britain for more than 4 weeks their benefit ceases), and limits on claimants from the European Economic Area who are not habitually Great Britain residents but in receipt of jobseekers allowance.

KCC supports proposals to make changes to these other adjustments particularly where they bring arrangements in line with other welfare benefits. As already indicated KCC supports the principle of bringing CTR schemes into line with housing benefit and other welfare reforms. We would like to schemes include an automatic trigger to allow for future changes. We would like assurances that district councils would be able to cope with the increased workload should reducing the backdating period result in claims being submitted more promptly.

#### *Other Changes to Council Tax Arrangements Outside CTR Schemes*

The second most common change made to council tax in other authorities (after reducing the discount for working age households) is to remove the second adult rebate. This is a discretionary reduction to council tax where a second adult (not the main council tax payer or their partner) lives in the house and is in receipt of welfare benefits or on a low income. All districts are considering abolishing the rebate. KCC's supports abolishing this rebate in all districts.

As part of the original CTR schemes all Kent districts agreed to make some reduction in empty property discounts (including second homes). Some abolished the discounts altogether. Further reductions in empty property discounts would continue to be outside CTR schemes (and thus not included in district consultation on their CTR schemes). Nonetheless, KCC would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its position that we support removing empty property discounts entirely (on the basis that owners of empty properties can generally more easily afford council tax and to act as incentive to bring properties back into use) as a higher priority to responding to RSG reductions than any changes to CTR schemes (albeit we believe empty property discounts and CTR schemes both need to be reviewed).

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### *Alternatives to Reviewing CTR Schemes*

Generally we feel that these sections in the consultation are poor. In particular the alternatives of increasing council tax or reducing council spending do not include any mention of referendum requirements (in the case of the former) or savings already needed to be considered in councils' budget plans. Whilst it is inevitable that CTR discounts for working age households will need to be subsidised by other council tax payers as RSG is removed this has not been mentioned in the alternatives. We feel this is an oversight in the consultation although accept it can be deduced relatively easily.

I hope you find this response helpful. In conclusion we would be looking for CTR schemes to be consistent with the county council's priorities to support the most vulnerable and give children the best possible start in life but also act help to incentivise individuals into work to help grow the Kent economy. We recognise that at the same time schemes must reflect the financial necessities being placed on local government and inevitably this complex mix can result in some conflicting consequences.

Yours sincerely

**John Simmonds MBE**

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement

**Council Tax Reduction Scheme  
Exceptional Hardship Policy**

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## 1.0 Background

1.1 An Exceptional Hardship Policy has been created by the Council to assist persons who have applied for Council Tax Reduction and who are facing 'exceptional hardship'. This is to provide further assistance where an applicant is in receipt of Council Tax Reduction but the level of support being paid by the Council does not meet their full Council Tax liability.

1.2 Exceptional Hardship will be available to any applicant where their daily award of Council Tax Reduction does not meet 100% of their Council Tax liability (less any appropriate discounts and non-dependant deductions).

1.3 The main features of the policy are as follows:

- The operation of the policy will be at the total discretion of the Council;
- The policy will be operated by the Revenues and Benefits service on behalf of the Council;
- Exceptional Hardship falls within S13A 1 A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and forms part of the Council Tax Reduction scheme;
- Exceptional Hardship payments will only be available from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 and **will not be available for any other debt other than outstanding Council Tax;**
- A pre-requisite is that an applicant must be paying Council Tax and receiving Council Tax Reduction for the period in which an Exceptional Hardship Payment has been requested;
- Where an Exceptional Hardship Payment is requested for a previous period, Exceptional Hardship must have been proven to have existed throughout the whole of the period requested;
- Exceptional Hardship Payments are designed as a short-term help to the applicant only and it is expected that payments will be made for a short term only; and
- All applicants will be expected to engage with the Council and undertake the full application process. Failure to do so will inevitably mean that no payment will be made.

### **2.0 Exceptional Hardship and Equalities**

2.1 The creation of an Exceptional Hardship Policy meets the Council's obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

2.2 The Council recognises the importance of protecting its most vulnerable customers and also the impact the changes imposed by the removal of Council Tax Benefit by Central Government. This policy has been created to ensure that a level of protection and support is available to those applicants most in need. It should be noted that an Exceptional Hardship Policy is intended to help in cases of **extreme** financial hardship and not support a lifestyle or lifestyle choice. Whilst the definition 'Exceptional Hardship' is not exactly defined by this policy, it is accepted that changes to the level of support generally will cause financial hardship and any payment made will be at the total discretion of the Council. Exceptional Hardship should be considered as 'hardship beyond that which would normally be suffered'

### **3.0 Purpose of this policy**

3.1 The purpose of this policy is to specify how the Council will operate the scheme, to detail the application process and indicate a number of factors, which will be considered when deciding if an Exceptional Hardship payment can be made.

3.2 Each case will be treated on its own merits and all applicants will be treated fairly and equally in both accessibility and also decisions made with applications.

### **4.0 The Exceptional Hardship Process**

4.1 As part of the process of applying for additional support, all applicants must be willing to undertake **all** of the following:

- a. Make a separate application for assistance;
- b. Provide full details of their income and expenditure;
- c. Where a person is self-employed or a director of a private limited company, details of their business including business accounts must be supplied;
- d. Accept assistance from either the Council or third parties such as the CAB or similar organisations to enable them to manage their finances more effectively, including the termination of non-essential expenditure;
- e. Identify potential changes in payment methods and arrangements to assist the applicant;
- f. Assist the Council to minimise liability by ensuring that all discounts, exemptions and reductions are properly granted; and
- g. Maximise their income through the application for other welfare benefits, cancellation of non-essential contracts and outgoings and identifying the most economical tariffs for the supply of utilities and services generally.

4.2 Through the operation of this policy the Council will look to

- Allow a short period of time for someone to adjust to unforeseen short-term circumstances and to enable them to “bridge the gap” during this time, whilst the applicant seeks alternative solutions;
- Enable long term support to households in managing their finances;
- Help applicants through personal crises and difficult events that affect their finances;
- Prevent exceptional hardship;
- Help those applicants who are trying to help themselves financially; and
- Encourage and support people to obtain and sustain employment.

4.3 It cannot be awarded for the following circumstances:

- Where the full Council Tax liability is being met by Council Tax Reduction;
- For any other reason, other than to reduce Council Tax liability;

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- Where the Council considers that there are unnecessary expenses/debts etc and that the applicant has not taken reasonable steps to reduce these;
- To pay for any arrears of Council Tax Reduction caused through the failure of the applicant to notify changes in circumstances in a timely manner or where the applicant has failed to act correctly or honestly; or
- To cover previous years Council Tax arrears

### **5.0 Awarding an Exceptional Hardship Payment**

5.1 The Council will decide whether or not to make an Exceptional Hardship award, and how much any award might be.

5.2 When making this decision the Council will consider:

- The shortfall between Council Tax Reduction and Council Tax liability;
- Whether the applicant has engaged with the Exceptional Hardship process;
- The personal circumstances, age and medical circumstances (including ill health and disabilities) of the applicant, their partner any dependants and any other occupants of the applicant's home;
- The difficulty experienced by the applicant, which prohibits them from being able to meet their Council Tax liability, and the length of time this difficulty will exist;
- The income and expenditure of the applicant, their partner and any dependants or other occupants of the applicant's home;
- How reasonable expenditure exceeds income;
- In the case of a self-employed applicant, whether they are in gainful employment;
- All income received by the applicant, their partner and any member of their household, irrespective of whether the income may fall to be disregarded under the Council Tax Reduction scheme;

- Any savings or capital that might be held by the applicant, their partner and any member of their household, irrespective of whether the capital may fall to be disregarded under the Council Tax Reduction scheme;
- Other debts outstanding for the applicant and their partner;
- The exceptional nature of the applicant and/or their family's circumstances that impact on finances; and
- The length of time they have lived in the property;

5.3 The above list is not exhaustive and other relevant factors and special circumstances will be considered.

5.4 An award of Exceptional Hardship does not guarantee that a further award will be made at a later date, even if the applicant's circumstances have not changed.

5.5 An Exceptional Hardship payment may be less than the difference between the Council Tax liability and the amount of Council Tax Reduction paid. The level of payment may be nil if the Council feels that, in its opinion, the applicant is not suffering 'exceptional hardship' or where the applicant has failed to comply with the Exceptional Hardship process.

## **6.0 Publicity**

6.1 The Council will make a copy of this policy available for inspection and it will be published on the Council's website.

## **7.0 Claiming an Exceptional Hardship payment**

7.1 An applicant must make a claim for an Exceptional Hardship award by submitting an application to the Council. The application form can be obtained via the telephone, in person at one of the Council offices and/or via the Council's website.

7.2 Applicants can get assistance with the completion of the form from the

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Revenues and Benefits service or Customer Services at the Council.

- 7.3 The application form must be fully completed and supporting information or evidence provided, as reasonably requested by the Council. The form must be returned within one calendar month of its issue.
- 7.4 In most cases the person who claims the Exceptional Hardship award will be the person entitled to Council Tax Reduction. However, a claim can be accepted from someone acting on another's behalf, such as an appointee, if it is considered reasonable.

### **8.0 Changes in circumstances**

- 8.1 The Council may revise an award of Exceptional Hardship where the applicant's circumstances have changed which either increases or reduces their Council Tax Reduction entitlement.

### **9.0 Duties of the applicant and the applicant's household**

- 9.1 A person claiming an Exceptional Hardship payment is required to:
- Provide the Council with such information as it may require to make a decision;
  - Tell the Council of any changes in circumstances that may be relevant to their ongoing claim; and
  - Provide the Council with such other information as it may require in connection with their claim.

### **10.0 The award and duration of an Exceptional Hardship Payment**

- 10.1 Both the amount and the duration of the award are determined at the discretion of the Council, and will be done so on the basis of the evidence supplied and the circumstances of the claim.
- 10.2 The start date of such a payment and the duration of any payment will be determined by the Council. In any event, the maximum length of the award will not exceed the end of the financial year in which the award is given.

**11.0 Payment**

11.0 Any Exceptional Hardship payment will be made direct onto the customer's Council Tax account, thereby reducing the amount of Council Tax payable.

**12.0 Overpaid Exceptional Hardship Payments**

12.1 Overpaid Exceptional Hardship payments will generally be recovered directly from the applicant's Council Tax account, thus increasing the amount of Council Tax due and payable.

**13.0 Notification of an award**

13.1 The Council will notify the applicant, in writing, the outcome of each application for Exceptional Hardship payment.

**14.0 Appeals**

14.1 Exceptional Hardship payments are granted under S13A 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as part of the Council Tax Reduction scheme. As such, the normal Council Tax appeal process applies and an appeal can be made at any time. The initial appeal should be made to the Council who will review any decision. Ultimately, any decision can be considered by an independent Valuation Tribunal.

**15.0 Fraud**

15.1 The Council is committed to protecting public funds and ensuring that funds are awarded to the people who are rightfully entitled to them.

15.2 An applicant who tries to fraudulently claim an Exceptional Hardship payment by falsely declaring their circumstances, providing a false statement or evidence in support of their application, may have committed an offence under The Fraud Act 2006.

15.3 Where the Council suspects that such a fraud may have been committed, this matter will be investigated as appropriate and may lead to criminal

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proceedings being instigated.

### **16.0 Complaints**

16.1 The Council's 'Compliments and Complaints Procedure' (available on the Council's website) will apply in the event of any complaint about this policy.

### **17.0 Policy Review**

17.1 This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis and updated as appropriate to ensure it remains fit for purpose. However, a review may take place sooner should there be any significant changes in legislation.



### Equality Impact Assessment Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Authority:	Sevenoaks District Council
Date EqIA commenced:	23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2016
Date first stage EqIA finalised for pre-consultation decision:	24 <sup>th</sup> May 2016 (version 1) 28 <sup>th</sup> June 2016 (version 2)
Date second stage EqIA finalised after consultation closed, prior to final decision being taken:	27 <sup>th</sup> October 2016
Job titles of officers involved in completing the EqIA:	Chief Finance Officer Head of Transformation and Strategy Head of Revenues & Benefits West Kent Equalities Officer

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Assessment of the proposed changes to the scheme from 2017, against the protected characteristics	Page 4
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### **Summary of decision to be made**

Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, the Council has maintained a local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The Council has the ability to determine the level of reduction given to working age applicants only. The scheme for pension age applicants is determined by Central Government.

We have decided to complete a full review of the scheme. The objectives of the review are to:

- Accurately target support to those working age claimants who most need it.
- Align the scheme with proposed changes to Housing Benefit and introduction of Universal Credit.
- Address potential shortfalls in funding due to the continued reduction in Central Government grants.
- Maintain a common approach to the design of local schemes across Kent.

### **Scope of this equality impact assessment**

- Review of the current scheme, introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.
- Proposed changes to the scheme from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017.

### **How is the decision relevant to the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty?**

The need to ensure that the scheme is not unlawfully discriminatory is relevant to the first aim of the duty to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

The need to consider how we can take steps to meet the needs of people with protected characteristics and whether people with disabilities may need to be treated more favourably, in how the scheme is designed, is relevant to the second aim of the duty to advance equality of opportunity.

The proposed service changes could also be relevant to fostering good relations with regard to maintaining the confidence and trust in the local authority by people with protected characteristics who may use our services.

### **Review of the current scheme, introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013**

The current scheme requires all working age claimants to pay 18.5% of their council tax liability. Transitional funding meant claimants were only required to pay 8.5% in the first year of the scheme.

The current scheme was subject to a comprehensive equality impact assessment in 2012. That assessment identified that our Council Tax Reduction Scheme had the potential to have a negative impact on working age people with disabilities, carers, women and younger age groups. To mitigate these potential impacts it was agreed that we would continue to treat people with disabilities, carers and households with young children more favourably by disregarding some income, giving them a higher council tax reduction. The impact on working age groups was as a result of the Government protecting pension age people from any changes. However, transitional funding was intended to reduce the extent of the impacts in the first year of the scheme.

The equality impact assessment was reviewed by Full Council in October 2014 and found that the impact of the 18.5% reduction on people with disabilities had not altered significantly, that the impact on carers was more significant than initially anticipated and that the impact on females was less significant than initially anticipated. The scheme continues to disregard some income for people with disabilities, carers and

**Equality Impact Assessment  
Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

**Appendix D**

families with children, resulting in a higher council tax reduction. No further mitigating actions were identified.

Current claimant data is provided in Annex 1. Findings from the data are summarised below.

**Disability**

Working age people with disabilities make up a high proportion of the working age caseload at 21%. Working age people with disabilities receive more per week, than working age people without disabilities, on average.

**Carers**

There is a roughly equivalent proportion working age claimants with a carer in the household, than there are carers in the population overall. Working age claimants with a carer in the household receive more per week, on average, than working age claimants without a carer in the household.

**Age**

Those aged 18-24 make up a lower proportion of the caseload than the population overall. Those aged 25-34 make up a higher proportion of the caseload than the population overall. Other age groups broadly reflect the overall population. Those aged 55-64 currently receive the highest weekly amount, on average. Those aged 18-24 currently receive the lowest weekly amount, on average.

**Sex**

Females make up a high proportion of the caseload at 71%. Although, there is a small difference between the average amounts females and males receive per week, this is due to factors relating to circumstances which directly affect the calculation of council tax reduction, and is not linked to a claimant's sex.

**Race**

This information is not collected from claimants as it is not relevant to the calculation of council tax reduction. No new data is available, following the consultation in 2012.

**Other protected characteristics**

We do not collect information about the following characteristics from claimants as it is not relevant to the calculation of council tax reductions:

- Religion of belief
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Pregnancy or maternity

**Conclusions - review of the current scheme (2016-17)**

All working age claimants, including those with protected characteristics, have received a reduction in their benefit amount. Pension age claimants, who also have protected characteristics, have not received a reduction as they are protected from any changes by Central Government. For example, 37% of claimants of pension age have a disability, 3% are carers and 61% are female.

The data shows that we currently provide higher reductions to working age people with disabilities and carers. There is no evidence to suggest that this is insufficient to mitigate the impacts of the scheme overall. The calculation of the reduction amount is not related to a claimant's sex or age (with the exception of those of pension age who

are protected). Any differences between the average weekly amounts received by males, females and working age groups is likely to be as a result of other factors.

### **Proposed changes to the scheme from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017**

There are nine potential options to adjust the scheme. Current claimant data for each of the options, where available, is provided in Annex 1. Where an option applies to new claimants, we have provided data for current claimants (where available) as an indication of the possible impacts as it is not possible to predict who may apply after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017. Findings from the data are summarised below.

#### **Disability**

There is a potential adverse impact on people of working age with a disability of the following options:

- reducing the maximum level of support for working-age claimants from 81.5% to 80%
  - Existing claimants with disabilities (678 people) would lose 33 pence per week, on average, compared to claimants without disabilities, who would lose an average of 30 pence per week. Claimants with disabilities would continue to receive £1.76 per week more than claimants without disabilities, on average.
  - This option was supported by 25.7% of people with disabilities who responded to the consultation, compared with 41.3% of respondents without a disability.

**Mitigation:** we would continue to treat people with disabilities more favourably by disregarding income received from certain disability benefits. The Exceptional Hardship Policy allows for ill-health and disabilities to be considered when deciding whether to award a payment. An Exceptional Hardship Policy was supported by high proportions of people with disabilities and people without disabilities, who responded to the consultation.

#### **Impact of other options affecting existing claimants**

- The proportion of those that are likely to be affected by the minimum income level for self-employed is less than the proportion of people with disabilities in the caseload overall. This option was supported by 43.2% of people with disabilities who responded to the consultation, compared with 27% of respondents without a disability.
- We are not able to forecast the impacts of reducing the period a person can be absent from Great Britain or excluding foreign nationals with limited immigration status. These options were supported by high proportions of people with disabilities and people without disabilities, who responded to the consultation.

**Mitigation:** an exemption for temporary absence due to medical treatment would reduce any potential impact on claimants with a disability; a range of other council tax disregards are available for those absent from home to receive or provide care due to ill health.

#### **Impact of other options affecting new claimants**

- For options affecting new claimants: removing family premium, reducing backdating to one month, removing the work related activity component and limiting the number of dependents to two children, we cannot predict what proportion of people with disabilities may apply for council tax reduction in 2017. However, for those options where data is available, the proportion of current claimants within these categories is in line with, or less than, the proportion of people with disabilities in the caseload overall. People with disabilities, who responded to the consultation, were more likely

**Equality Impact Assessment  
Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

**Appendix D**

to support the removal of family premium (40.5%) than people without disabilities (31.8%). People without disabilities (58.7%) were more likely to support reducing backdating to one month than people with disabilities (41.9%) who responded to the consultation. Low proportions of people with disabilities and people without disabilities, who responded to the consultation, supported removing the work related activity component. High proportions of people with disabilities and people without disabilities were in favour of limiting the number of dependents to two children.

**Mitigation:** not required at this stage. We will monitor the impact of these options on new claimants and consider whether any further action may need to be taken to mitigate any impacts.

### **Carers**

There is a potential adverse impact on people of working age with a carer in the household of the following options:

- reducing the maximum level of support for working-age claimants from 81.5% to 80%.
  - Carers (344 people) would lose 36 pence per week, on average, compared to claimants who are not carers, who would lose 30 pence per week, on average. Carers would continue to receive £3.31 per week more than claimants who are not carers, on average.
  - We did not collect details of carers from the consultation.

**Mitigation:** we would continue to treat carers more favourably by disregarding income received from certain carer benefits. The Exceptional Hardship Policy allows for any other occupants of the claimant's home to be considered when deciding whether to award a payment.

### **Impact of other options affecting existing claimants**

- The proportion of those that are likely to be affected by the minimum income level for self-employed is less than the proportion of carers in the caseload overall.
- We are not able to forecast the impacts of reducing the period a person can be absent from Great Britain or excluding foreign nationals with limited immigration status.

**Mitigation:** a range of council tax disregards are available for those absent from home to receive or provide care due to ill health.

### **Impact of other options affecting new claimants**

- For options affecting new claimants: removing family premium, reducing backdating to one month, removing the work related activity component and limiting the number of dependents to two children, we cannot predict what proportion of carers may apply for council tax reduction in 2017. However, for those options where data is available, the proportion of current claimants within these categories is in line with, or less than, the proportion of carers in the caseload overall.

**Mitigation:** not required at this stage. We will monitor the impact of these options on new claimants and consider whether any further action may need to be taken to mitigate any impacts.

### **Sex**

There is a potential adverse impact on working age males and females of the following options:

- reducing the maximum level of support for working-age claimants be reduced from 81.5% to 80%.
  - Although a higher proportion of females (71%) would be affected than in the caseload overall, males would lose more (32 pence per week, on average) compared to females (30 pence per week, on average).

–A low proportion of female and male respondents to the consultation supported this option, with males more likely to disagree than females.

**Mitigation:** we will monitor the impact of this option on claimants. Female and male claimants, who are facing exceptional hardship, will be able to apply for assistance with their payments.

- Remove the Family Premium for all new working-age claimants.
  - 83% of existing claimants in this category are female and 17% are male. We cannot predict what proportion of males and females may apply for council tax reduction in 2017 but all new claimants would receive an average of £3.49 less than current claimants.
  - 30.3% of females and 41.2% of males who responded to the consultation agreed with this option.
 

**Mitigation:** we will monitor the impact of this option on new claimants. The Exceptional Hardship Policy allows for any dependents to be considered when deciding whether to award a payment.
- Limit the number of dependent children to a maximum of two for new claimants.
  - 74% of existing claimants in this category are female and 26% are male. We cannot predict what proportion of males and females may apply for council tax reduction in 2017.
  - 57.6% of females and 70.6% of males who responded to the consultation agreed with this option.
 

**Mitigation:** not required at this stage but we will monitor the impact of this option on new claimants.

#### Impact of other options affecting existing claimants

- The proportion of males and females affected by introducing a minimum income level for self-employed (recommendation (a)(iv)) is roughly in line with the caseload overall. These claimants would receive an average of £15.41 less per week, than they do now. 34.3% of females and 45.1% of males who responded to the consultation agreed with this option.
- We are not able to forecast the impacts of reducing the period a person can be absent from Great Britain or excluding foreign nationals with limited immigration status. These options were supported by high proportions of males and females, who responded to the consultation.

#### Impact of other options affecting new claimants

- For other options affecting new claimants: reducing backdating to one month and removing the work related activity component, we cannot predict what proportion of males and females may apply for council tax reduction in 2017. 44.4% of females and 51% of males who responded to the consultation supported reducing backdating to one month. Low proportions of males and females, who responded to the consultation, supported removing the work relating activity component.

#### Combined impacts and mitigation

As there are a high proportion of female claimants overall, there is potential for a negative impact on female claimants who may be affected by more than one option. The combined effect of these options may be significant for new claimants in 2017. Female and male claimants, who are facing exceptional hardship, will be able to apply for assistance with their payments. High proportions of males and females who responded to the consultation supported an Exceptional Hardship Policy.

**Age**

As claimants of pension age are protected, there is a potential adverse impact on other age groups, of the following options:

- Reducing the maximum level of support for working-age claimants from 81.5% to 80%.
  - The proportion of age groups affected by this option is in line with the caseload overall. There is a difference of 2 pence in the amounts each age group would lose per week, on average.
  - A higher proportion of those aged 25-34 (50%) who responded to the consultation, supported this option than those aged 35-44 (14.7%), 45-54 (34%) and 55-65 (33.3%).

**Mitigation:** see combined impacts and mitigation (page 8).

- Introducing a minimum income floor for self-employed claimants).
  - Affects a higher proportion of claimants aged 35-44(37%).
  - Those aged 45-54 (44%) and 55-65 (37.3%) who responded to the consultation, were more in favour of this option than those aged 35-44 (29.4%) and those aged 25-34 (33.3%).

**Mitigation:** see combined impacts and mitigation (page 8).

- Remove the Family Premium for all new working-age claimants.
  - There are a higher proportion of current claimants aged 35-54 currently under this criteria.
  - We cannot predict what proportion of age groups may apply for council tax reduction in 2017 but all new claimants would receive an average of £3.49 less, per week, than current claimants.
  - Those aged 55-65 (47.1%) and 25-34 (44.4%) who responded to the consultation, were more in favour of this option than those aged 35-44 (20.6%) and those aged 45-54 (26%).

**Mitigation:** see combined impacts and mitigation (page 8).

- Limit the number of dependent children to a maximum of two for new claimants.
  - There are a higher proportion of current claimants aged 35-44 (56%)under this criteria.
  - We cannot predict what proportion of age groups may apply for council tax reduction in 2017 but all new claimants would receive an average of £2.83 less, per week, than current claimants.
  - Those aged 25-34 (72.2%) 45-54 (72%) and 55-65 )60.8) who responded to the consultation, were more in favour of this option than those aged 35-44 (50%).

**Mitigation:** see combined impacts and mitigation (page 8).

**Impact of other options affecting existing claimants**

- We are not able to forecast the impacts of reducing the period a person can be absent from Great Britain and excluding foreign nationals with limited immigration status. These options were supported by a high proportion of all age groups who responded to the consultation.

**Impact of other options affecting new claimants**

- For other options affecting new claimants: reducing backdating to one month and removing the work related activity component, we cannot predict what proportion of

age groups may apply for council tax reduction in 2017. Those aged 25-34 (61.1%) were most in favour of reducing backdating to one month followed by those aged 35-44 (47.1%) 55-65 (45.1%) and 45-54 (42%). The removal of the work related activity component was supported by low proportions of all age groups, with the exception of those age 25-34 (50%).

### **Combined impacts and mitigation**

As the government has protected pensioners, the impact will fall on working age groups. This impact is as a result of national legislation, and is not within our discretion to mitigate. Within working age groups, although the impact on individual age groups may differ for each option, calculation of council tax reduction is not related to a person's age so it is difficult to mitigate any potential adverse impacts on the basis of age alone. Any differences in entitlement are likely to be as a result of other factors e.g. whether the claimant has a disability, is a carer or has children in the household. Options for reducing the impacts based on these factors have been suggested. However, we can continue to monitor the impact of any changes on age groups to identify whether there are any particular needs relating to age groups that we may need to meet.

### **Race**

This information is not collected from claimants as it is not relevant to the calculation of council tax reduction. The Census (2011) shows that people from Minority Ethnic backgrounds are more likely to be economically active and less likely to be self-employed, than people from a White background. We received a very small number of responses from people from a Minority Ethnic Background, to the consultation. We have no evidence to indicate that working age people with different ethnic backgrounds would be affected differently.

### **Armed Forces Community**

This is considered in this equality impact assessment as part of the commitments within the Community Covenant. Armed forces personnel deployed on operations overseas, who normally pay council tax, benefit from a tax-free payment on the cost of council tax paid directly by the Ministry of Defence. Following the announcement by the Chancellor in his 2012 Budget statement, Council Tax Relief will be worth just under £600 (based upon 2012/13 council tax) for an average six-month deployment based on the average Council Tax per dwelling in England. This will continue to be paid at a flat rate to all eligible personnel. More information is available at [www.mod.uk](http://www.mod.uk). We also disregard income from war disablement pensions, providing eligible claimants with a higher council tax reduction.

### **Other protected characteristics**

We do not collect information about the following characteristics from claimants as it is not relevant to the calculation of council tax reductions:

- Religion of belief
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Pregnancy or maternity

The option limit the number of dependents to two children would affect any female claimants who are pregnant before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017. Otherwise, there is no evidence to indicate that working age people with these protected characteristics would be affected differently to claimants overall.



**Conclusions - proposed changes to the scheme from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017**

All options will result in working age claimants, including those with protected characteristics, paying more towards their Council Tax bill from 2016-17. Pension age claimants, who also have protected characteristics, will not be affected as they are protected from any changes by Central Government.

Some working age claimants will be affected by more than one of the options. It is not possible to model any cumulative impacts but the possibility that some claimants may be adversely affected by more than one option should be taken into account when deciding which options will be taken forward. Some options will affect existing claimants and some will affect new claimants from 2017.

When deciding which options to take forward, the potential severity of impacts on claimants with protected characteristics needs to be weighed up against any potential financial savings to the Council. Options resulting in higher savings to the Council are likely to impact on more claimants or result in some claimants paying higher amount towards their Council Tax bill.

In complying with our obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty, we must have 'due regard' to the following:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
  - In deciding which options to take forward, we must ensure that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme does not unlawfully discriminate against any protected characteristics. This can be achieved by using the findings of this equality impact assessment to inform the decision about which options are taken forward.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups.
  - In deciding which options to take forward, we must consider how we can minimise disadvantage experienced by people with protected characteristics, take steps to meet the needs of people with protected characteristics and encourage people who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life. The Public Sector Equality Duty does not prevent us from taking a decision about our Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Should we decide to take forward any options that may put people with protected characteristics at a disadvantage, we should consider taking action to mitigate those impacts. The Equality Act allows us to treat some people more favourably than others in meeting their needs. This would allow us to protect some income received by people with disabilities and carers, provide exemptions for some claimants with protected characteristics or take the needs of people with protected characteristics into account within an Exceptional Hardship Policy.
- Foster good relations between people from different groups.
  - In deciding which options to take forward, we may wish to consider whether our decision could impact on wider community relations between people with protected characteristics.

Finally, we will monitor the impact of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme on claimants with protected characteristics from 2017. We will provide reports to indicate whether

## Agenda Item 5

### **Equality Impact Assessment Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

### **Appendix D**

the impacts are in line with our predictions or whether any further action may need to be taken to mitigate any impacts.

Equality Impact Assessment  
Annex 1 - Claimant data

Appendix D

<b>Options affecting existing claimants</b>												
Current claimants (working age only)	All	Disability	No Disability	Carer	Non Carer	Female	Male	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Number - all claimants	3174	678	2496	344	2830	2256	919	137	722	836	850	629
Percentage		21%	79%	11%	89%	71%	29%	4%	23%	26%	27%	20%
Average weekly CTAX reduction	£16.58	£17.99	£16.20	£19.58	£16.21	£16.30	£17.26	£15.76	£15.80	£16.61	£17.00	£17.04
<b>Reducing the maximum level of support to 80%</b>												
Estimated average weekly loss	£0.31	£0.33	£0.30	£0.36	£0.30	£0.30	£0.32	£0.29	£0.29	£0.31	£0.31	£0.31
<b>Use of a minimum level of income for self-employed earners (data is for after 1 year)</b>												
Claimants under this criteria (No.)	304	12	292	14	290	196	108	6	59	113	85	41
Claimants under this criteria (%)	5%	4%	96%	5%	95%	64%	36%	2%	19%	37%	28%	13%
Average reduction under this criteria	£16.77	£19.12	£16.67	£19.24	£16.65	£16.16	£17.88	£14.19	£17.05	£17.82	£16.03	£15.35
Estimated average weekly loss	£15.41	£15.41	£15.41	£15.41	£15.41	£15.41	£15.41	£15.41	£15.41	£15.41	£15.41	£15.41
<b>Reducing the period which a person can be absent from Great Britain</b>												
No data available												
<b>Excluding foreign nationals with limited immigration status</b>												
No data available												

<b>Options affecting new claimants from 2017 - data for existing claimants within these categories has been provided, where possible, to give an indication of possible impacts. We cannot estimate data for new claimants.</b>												
	All	Disability	No Disability	Carer	Non Carer	Female	Male	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
<b>Removing the family premium</b>												
Current claimants under this criteria (No.)	554	0	554	1	553	459	95	4	102	246	178	24
Current claimants under this criteria (%)	9%	0%	100%	0%	100%	83%	17%	1%	18%	44%	32%	4%
Average weekly CTAX reduction under this criteria (current)	£14.34	£0.00	£14.34	£16.94	£14.33	£13.50	£18.35	£10.39	£13.19	£14.52	£14.53	£16.57
Estimated weekly loss (new claimants)	£3.49	£3.49	£3.49	£3.49	£3.49	£3.49	£3.49	£3.49	£3.49	£3.49	£3.49	£3.49

Agenda Item 5

Equality Impact Assessment  
Annex 1 - Claimant data

Appendix D

Options affecting new claimants from 2017 - data for existing claimants within these categories has been provided, where possible, to give an indication of possible impacts. We cannot estimate data for new claimants.												
	All	Disability	No Disability	Carer	Non Carer	Female	Male	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
<b>Reducing backdating to one month</b>												
No data available												
<b>Removing the Work Related Activity Component</b>												
No data available												
<b>Limiting the maximum number of dependent children to two</b>												
Current claimants under this criteria (No.)	34	0	34	0	34	25	9	0	7	19	8	0
Current claimants under this criteria (%)	1%	0%	100%	0%	100%	74%	26%	0%	21%	56%	24%	0%
Average weekly CTAX reduction under this criteria (current)	£14.03	£0.00	£14.03	£0.00	£14.03	£13.26	£16.18	£0.00	£12.23	£14.48	£14.54	£0.00
Estimated weekly loss (new claimants)	£2.83	£2.83	£2.83	£2.83	£2.83	£2.83	£2.83	£2.83	£2.83	£2.83	£2.83	£2.83
<b>Introducing a scheme to help applicants suffering exceptional hardship</b>												
No data available												

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Protected characteristics of claimants of pension age - not affected (for information)							
Pension age	All Claimants	Disability	No Disability	Carer	Non Carer	Female	Male
Current number of claimants	2845	1057	1788	85	2760	1744	1101
Proportion of claimants		37%	63%	3%	97%	61%	39%
Current average CTAX reduction (weekly)	£19.73	£20.52	£19.26	£23.78	£19.60	£19.53	£20.04

Notes: Claimant data is based on the lead applicant so the actual impacts will also depend on household composition.  
Ethnicity, religion/belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy & maternity, marital and civil partnership and gender reassignment data is not collected from claimants as it is not relevant to the calculation of Council Tax Reduction.

**Item 7 - Environmental Health Partnership - charging for food hygiene re-rating inspections**

The attached report was considered by the Direct & Trading Advisory Committee on 1 November 2016, and the relevant Minute extract was not available prior to the printing of this agenda.

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**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP- CHARGING FOR FOOD HYGIENE RE-RATING INSPECTIONS**

**Cabinet - 10 November 2016**

Report of Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services

Status: For Decision

Also considered by: Direct and Trading Advisory Committee - 1 November 2016

Key Decision: Yes

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**This report supports the Key Aim of : A dynamic and sustainable economy**

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Matthew Dickins

**Contact Officer** Annie Sargent Ext. 3085

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**Recommendation to Direct and Trading Advisory Committee:** That it be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) Members note the Environmental Health's team participation in the Food Standards Agency pilot of charging businesses for a food hygiene re-rating inspection.
- b) the fee for a food hygiene re-rating inspection be set at £200 for the period of the Food Standards Agency pilot.
- c) if the pilot is successful, and with the support of the Food Standards Agency, to continue charging on a cost recovery basis.

**Recommendation to Cabinet:** That

- a) Cabinet note the participation in the Food Standards Agency pilot of charging businesses for a food hygiene re-rating inspection, and
  - b) the fee be set at £200 for the period of the pilot
  - c) if the pilot is successful, to continue charging on a cost recovery basis.
- 

**Reason for recommendation:** To recover valuable inspection resource that is currently lost to the team, as a result of the appeal process for the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. The benefit to a food business is that the 3 month waiting period that is usually implemented will be waived as part of the fee. The fee will be another incentive for businesses to obtain good food hygiene rating scores.

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## Agenda Item 6

### Introduction and Background

- 1 All food businesses that sell food and drink directly to the final consumer are given a food hygiene rating each time they are inspected. The ratings are from 5 (best) to 0 (worst) and the rating can go up or down depending on the officers findings at each inspection or re-rating visit. The scheme is popular with the public and has helped to drive up food hygiene standards across the sector.
- 2 Under the Rating Scheme as currently set out by the Food Standards Agency, any business that is awarded a rating of less than 5 at an inspection is entitled to apply once, and only once, for a re-rating inspection. From the date of the inspection there is a stand still period of 3 months during which the local authority cannot re-inspect. This gives the business time to deal with any legal contraventions that were identified during the original inspection. After the 3 months expires the local authority then has up to 3 months in which to undertake the re-rating inspection. Currently the local authority cannot charge for this additional inspection. In 2015-16 the Environmental Health Partnership undertook 32 re-rating inspections.
- 3 The scheme that the Food Standards Agency is piloting will allow the local authority to charge a fee for re-inspection, operating a cost recovery scheme based on the average cost that is currently incurred when undertaking a food hygiene re-rating inspection. The 3 month stand still period is removed. The local authority will have 3 months in which to undertake the inspection, from the date that the re-rating request and fee are received.
- 4 Under the proposed scheme, there will be no restriction on the number of times that a business can request a re-rating inspection but the fee will be due for each inspection. There is no indication that a fee will deter businesses from seeking a re-rating inspection and the ability to seek more than one re-inspection will enable step-by-step improvement and is likely to be welcomed by businesses.
- 5 The Food Standards Agency requested the Environmental Health Partnership to participate in the pilot. The intention of the pilot is to provide the Food Standards Agency with data which will help them finalise the detail of the revised scheme before they roll it out nationally in 2017.
- 6 The Portfolio Holder has therefore agreed that the Environmental Health Partnership should participate in the pilot, as a Portfolio Holder decision.
- 7 The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme is a non-statutory scheme in England and Wales and a re-inspection can therefore be described as a service which the Council currently provides on a non-commercial basis to a food business operator at their request.
- 8 Cost recovery for re rating visits have been in place for some time in Wales. There is evidence here to suggest that businesses implement best practice advice more when they are paying for it.



## **Key Implications**

### Financial

Due to the short period of the pilot it is not possible to estimate an income target, but based on the number of re-rating inspections in 2015/16, this is likely to be in the region of £6,000.

### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 gives local authorities the power to charge for a service which is not a statutory function.

### Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

## **Conclusion**

This report provides Members with an overview of the Food Standards Agency's proposal to introduce a change to the National Food Hygiene Rating scheme. The purpose of the pilot is to trial charging food businesses when they request a re-rating inspection following an initial food hygiene inspection rating. The charge will be based on cost recovery and will be calculated on the average cost that the Council currently incurs for the provision of the service. The pilot will operate for a period of 3 months and the Food Standards Agency will use the data collected to introduce a National Charging Scheme in 2017.

### **Appendices**

None

### **Background Papers:**

[Portfolio Holder decision - 10 \(2016/17\)](#)

**Richard Wilson**

**Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services**

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**Item 8 - Annual Review of Parking Charges 2017-18**

The attached report was considered by the Direct & Trading Advisory Committee on 1 November 2016, and the relevant Minute extract was not available prior to the printing of this agenda.

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## ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARKING CHARGES 2017-18

Cabinet - 10 November 2016

Report of: Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services

Status: For recommendation

Also considered by: Direct and Trading Advisory Committee - 1 November 2016

Key Decision: No

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**Executive Summary:** This report is the annual review of parking charges for 2017-18. It proposes for consultation on revised tariffs in the Council's off-street car parks and in on-street pay and display parking bays.

Helping manage and regulate parking supports the economic vibrancy and viability of Sevenoaks and improves the lives of residents.

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**This report supports the Key Aims of:** Providing value for money, and supporting and developing the local economy.

**Portfolio Holder** Councillor Matthew Dickins

**Contact Officer** John Strachan Ext. 7310

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### **Recommendation to Direct & Trading Advisory Committee:**

That the proposals for revised parking charges for 2017-18 be considered by the Committee, and its views be submitted for consideration by Cabinet, prior to consultation.

### **Recommendation to Cabinet:**

That the proposals for revised parking charges for 2017-18 along with any proposals submitted by the Direct & Trading Advisory be considered, and proposals for consultation be agreed.

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### **Reason for recommendation:**

To help regulate and manage the use of on and off street parking facilities in the District; to ensure car parking charges are set to support a sustainable local economy; and, to support services for residents as set out in the approved 10 year budget.

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# Agenda Item 7

## Introduction

- 1 This report considers the setting of parking charges in the Council's car parks and the fees for on-street parking between April 2017 and March 2018 inclusive. Amongst other measures, it proposes:
  - freezing charges in Buckhurst 1, Buckhurst 2, South Park, St Johns, St James, Suffolk Way and Sennocke;
  - freezing charges in Swanley;
  - freezing charges in Westerham and protecting the three hours free parking at Darent;
  - freezing evening charges;
  - freezing on-street Resident Permit, Visitor Voucher and Non-Resident Permit charges;
  - freezing Season Ticket charges;
  - protecting free all-day weekend use of the District Council's office car park; and,
  - preserving free parking on Sundays with the exception of Blighs.
- 2 A modest rise to one on-street tariff covering three roads in Sevenoaks is proposed, as is the extension of charges to Sundays in Blighs.

## Background

- 3 The Council operates a number of public car parks and on street pay and display facilities in towns and villages in the District. It is important to regulate these finite resources in order to balance the needs of parking users, including: commuters, local businesses, residents, shoppers and other visitors including tourists.
- 4 The Council's approach has been to ensure our parking charges are set to encourage people to visit our towns while at the same time promoting a good turnover of parking spaces for the benefit of businesses and visitors. Parking charges are one aspect of effective parking management however others - such as hours of operation and maximum stay periods - are also kept under review.
- 5 This has resulted in high use of the Council's car parks and on-street parking spaces, benefitting retailers. Past studies by the Local Data Company concluded that Sevenoaks town has one of the healthiest high streets in the country with the fewest number of empty shops for a town of its size. Indeed the Sevenoaks Economic Needs Study (ENS), conducted by Turley Economics and noted as part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan by the Planning Advisory Committee on 22 September 2016, states that Sevenoaks enjoys a vacancy rate of 6.72% which we believe to comprise those properties which are empty through natural turnover in tenants. This compares favourably with the national average of 11.2%. The Council's approach to parking management has undoubtedly contributed to this success.

- 6 In addition to operational costs such as non-domestic rates, insurance, general maintenance, enforcement and security, it is important to re-invest in the Council's car parks to ensure these assets remain safe and fit for purpose. Improvement works either undertaken or due to be implemented in 2016 include the installation of new safety barriers in South Park; increasing capacity in Darent; resurfacing in Darent and Buckhurst 1; surface improvements in South Park and Suffolk Way; and, the installation of energy-efficient lighting in Blighs.

### **Background Information**

- 7 Appendix A provides information on the current parking charges in neighbouring towns and Southeastern car parks. In considering Appendix A, it is helpful to note that the aforementioned ENS concluded 20% of the market conducts its main comparison shop in Tunbridge Wells, which lies 11 miles to the south of Sevenoaks. Tunbridge Wells has a town-centre vacancy rate of 13% and higher average parking charges than Sevenoaks. At 12% Bluewater was assessed as receiving considerably less business from residents of the Sevenoaks District than Tunbridge Wells, despite being the second most popular shopping centre in the UK, offering a wider mix of retailers and choice of comparison goods, and having free parking.
- 8 Appendix B presents existing parking charges alongside the proposed charges.

### **Sevenoaks Car Parks**

- 9 Sevenoaks town remains a thriving shopping centre, containing many popular high street shops and eateries, and many speciality shops, restaurants and pubs. The town has a busy daytime, weekend and evening economy, supported by the car parks and on street parking amenities.
- 10 There is daily pressure on parking spaces, both on and off street, particularly in Blighs car park which frequently reaches capacity.

### **Blighs**

- 11 In 2014 Sevenoaks District Council enabled the development of a new cornerstone Marks and Spencer at Blighs Meadow, helping to reinforce Sevenoaks as a popular retail hub.
- 12 It is proposed that the tariff currently in place between Monday and Saturday inclusive be extended to also include Sundays.
- 13 It should be noted that free parking on Sundays would be maintained in all the Council's other car parks, including the SDC staff car park in Gordon Road which provides complimentary all-day parking at weekends to assist workers in the town.

### **Buckhurst 1, Buckhurst 2, South Park, St Johns, St James and Suffolk Way**

- 14 There are no proposed changes to the tariffs in these car parks.

## Agenda Item 7

### Bradbourne and Sennocke

- 15 Bradbourne Car Park closed to the public in August 2016 to facilitate the development of a replacement multi-decked car park which is planned to open in April 2017.
- 16 There is a proposal under separate consideration to develop a much needed hotel on the site of the Sennocke car park to support the local economy and tourism. If this is progressed, the car park will be closed in spring 2017.
- 17 There are no proposed changes to the tariffs in these car parks.

### **Other Car Parks**

#### Bevan Place, Park Road and Station Road (Swanley)

- 18 There are no proposed changes to the tariffs in these car parks.

#### Darent, Quebec Avenue and Vicarage Hill (Westerham)

- 19 There are no proposed changes to the tariffs in these car parks.
- 20 To continue to ease pressure on the limited number of on-street spaces, it is proposed that three hours free parking is preserved in the Darent car park.

### **On-Street Parking**

- 21 On street fees apply on twenty roads across the District, covering eight tariffs divided into thirty-three charges.

#### High Street, London Road and South Park (Sevenoaks)

- 22 Town centre on-street pay and display parking bays operate at capacity throughout the day.
- 23 It is proposed that the tariff covering High Street, London Road and South Park be simplified by bringing it in line with that in Buckhurst 1, South Park and Suffolk Way, albeit with the preservation of a thirty minute charge which is unavailable in those car parks.

### **Other**

- 24 There are no proposed changes to the tariffs on any other roads in Sevenoaks, Swanley, Westerham, Edenbridge or elsewhere.

### **Resident Permits, Visitor Vouchers and Non-Resident Permits**

- 25 No changes are proposed to Resident Permits, Visitor Vouchers or Non-Resident Permits charges.



## Key Implications

### Financial

- 26 The Council's 10 year budget assumes a 2.5% increase in the levels of income, including from parking, to enable the delivery of a balanced budget and continued provision of valued services to residents. Members reduced this figure from 3.5% to reflect the authority's continuing focus on introducing further efficiencies, increasing investment income and to reflect the national economic climate of recent years. The proposed changes in charges would satisfy this requirement.

### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

- 27 Changes to the car park charges will require amending the on-street Traffic Regulation Order and the off-street Parking Order.

### Equality Impacts

- 28 There is a low risk that the proposals in this report would have any implications under the Equality Act.
- 29 Sevenoaks District Council supports the Blue Badge Scheme allowing free parking in its off-street car parks and in on-street pay and display parking bays.

### Community Impact and Outcomes

- 30 Measured and reasonable parking charges can encourage the use of more sustainable transport options and healthier lifestyles for journeys to school, work, and visits to shops and other amenities in towns and villages.

## Conclusions

Proposals to review the car parking charges for 2017-18 are detailed in the appendices to this report.

<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix A - Parking Charges for Neighbouring Authorities and Southeastern Rail car parks
	Appendix B - Proposals for On and Off-Street Parking Charges

**Background Papers** None

**Richard Wilson**  
Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services

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Indicative Car Park Charges in Neighbouring Towns and Southeastern Car Parks 2016						
	Southeastern Car Parks 1 <sup>1</sup> and 4 <sup>2</sup> , Sevenoaks	Tonbridge & Malling	Tunbridge Wells	Sevenoaks		
				Town Centre and Weekdays in Buckhurst 2 <sup>3</sup>	Blighs	Bradbourne <sup>4</sup> and Sennocke <sup>5</sup>
Up to 30 minutes		60p			70p	
Up to 1 hour		£1.20	£1.40	£1	£1.50	
Up to 2 hours		£2.10	£2.40	£2	£3	
Up to 3 hours		£2.80	£3.40	£3	£5	
Up to 4 hours		£3.40	£4.40	£4	£10	
Up to 5 hours			£5.20	£4.50		
Evenings			£1	£1	£1	
All day		£5.50	£4.70 - £10.00	£4.60 <sup>3</sup>		
Quarterly Season Ticket	£438 <sup>1</sup> and £348 <sup>2</sup>					£287.50 <sup>4</sup>
Annual Season Ticket	£1518 <sup>1</sup> and £1205 <sup>2</sup>					£1110 <sup>4</sup> and £1150 <sup>5</sup>

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Areas for consideration: Review of Fees and Charges 2017-18				
Off Street				
			Current	Revised
1A	Blighs	Up to 30 mins	70p	No Change
		Up to 1 hr	£1.50	
		Up to 2 hrs	£3	
		Up to 3 hrs	£5	
		Up to 4 hrs	£10	
		Evening	£1	
		Sundays – Up to 4 hrs	4 hours max stay	
1B	Buckhurst 1 South Park Suffolk Way	Up to 1 hr	£1	No Change
		Up to 2 hrs	£2	
		Up to 3 hrs	£3	
		Up to 4 hrs	£4	
		Up to 5 hrs	£4.50	
Evening	£1			
1C	Buckhurst 2 Weekdays	All day	£4.60	
		Evening	£1	
	Buckhurst 2 Saturdays	Up to 1 hr	£1	
		Up to 2 hrs	£2	
		Up to 3 hrs	£3	
		Up to 4 hrs	£4	
		Over 4 hours and all day	£4.60	
	Evening	£1		
	Buckhurst 2 and South Park Season Tickets	Annual Season Ticket	£859	
		Quarterly Season Ticket	£224.75	
Resident Permit		£35		
1D	Council Offices	Saturdays & Sundays	Free	
2A	St Johns St James	Up to 30 mins	20p	
		Up to 1 hr	40p	
		Up to 2hrs	60p	
		Up to 4 hrs	£1	
		Over 3 hrs and all day	£3.10	
		Annual Season Ticket	£429	
		Quarterly Season Ticket	£117.25	
Resident Permit	£35			
2B	Bradbourne	All day	£7	
		After 3pm up to 6.30pm	£1.50	
	Bradbourne Season	Annual Season Ticket	£1,110	
		Quarterly Season Ticket	£287.50	
2C	Sennocke	All day	£7	
		Up to 2 hrs	£1	
		After 3pm up to 6.30pm	£1.50	
	Sennocke Season Tickets	Annual Season Ticket	£1,150	
		Quarterly Season Ticket	£297.50	

Areas for consideration: Review of Fees and Charges 2016-17				
Off Street (continued)				
2D	Bevan Place Park Road (not all day) Station Road	Up to 30 mins	30p	No Change
		Up to 1 hr	50p	
		Up to 2 hrs	70p	
		Up to 4 hrs	£1.10	
		Over 4 hrs and all day	£4	
2E	Bevan Place Season Tickets	Annual Season Ticket	£396	
		Quarterly Season Ticket	£109	
2F	Darent	Up to 30 mins	Free	
		Up to 1 hr		
		Up to 2 hrs		
		Up to 3 hrs		
		Up to 4 hrs	£1.50	
		Over 4 hrs and all day	£3.50	
2G	Quebec Avenue	Up to 15 mins	10p	
		Up to 30 mins	20p	
		Up to 1 hr	50p	
		Up to 2 hrs	70p	
		Up to 4 hrs	£1.20	
		Over 4 hrs and all day	£3.10	
2H	Vicarage Hill	Up to 15 mins	10p	
		Up to 30 mins	20p	
		Up to 1 hr	60p	
		Up to 2 hrs	£1.50	

Areas for consideration: Review of Fees and Charges 2016-17				
On Street				
			Current	Revised
3A	High Street London Road South Park	Up to 30 mins	40p	50p
		Up to 1 hour	80p	£1
		Up to 2 hours	£1.40	£2
		Sunday	2 hours max stay	
3B	Sevenoaks Town Holly Bush Lane Plymouth Drive	Up to 30 mins	20p	No Change
		Up to 1 hour	60p	
		Up to 2 hours	£1.30	
		Over 2 hrs and all day	£3	
3C	Sevenoaks Station Moorwood Close (West)	Up to 30 mins	20p	
		Up to 1 hour	60p	
		Up to 2 hours	£1.30	
		Up to 4 hours	£2.40	
3D	Sevenoaks Station St Botolphs Ashley Close Moorwood Close (East)	Up to 30 mins	20p	
		Up to 1 hour	60p	
		Up to 2 hours	£1.30	
		Up to 4 hours	£2.40	
		Over 4 hrs and all day	£5.50	
3E	Sevenoaks District Resident Parking Permits	First	£35	
		Second	£70	
		Third	£125	
		Fourth	£250	
3F	Resident Visitors	Book of 5	£6	
3G	Non-Resident Parking	Town Annual	£270	
		Town Half Yearly	£135	
		Town Quarterly	£67.50	
		Station (West) Annual	£765	
		Station (West) Half Yearly	£382.50	
		Station (West) Quarterly	£191.25	
		Station (East) Annual	£650	
		Station (East) Half Yearly	£325	
Station (East) Quarterly	£162.50			
4A	Knockholt	All Day	£3.50	
		After 2pm up to 6pm	£2.40	
4B	Swanley Station Azalea Road Godsel Road	Up to 30 mins	20p	
		Up to 1 hour	60p	
		Up to 2 hours	£1.30	
		Up to 4 hours	£2.40	
		Over 4 ours and all day	£3.50	
4C	Westerham On Street The Green The Grange Market Square	15 minutes	10p	
		30 minutes	20p	
		1 hour	60p	
		2 hours	£1.50	
4D	Westerham On Street Fullers Hill Croydon Road	15 minutes	10p	
		30 minutes	20p	
		1 hour	60p	
		2 hours	£1.50	
		3 hours	£2.50	

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**Item 9 - Christmas Parking 2016**

The attached report was considered by the Direct & Trading Advisory Committee on 1 November 2016, and the relevant Minute extract was not available prior to the printing of this agenda.

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## CHRISTMAS PARKING 2016

### Cabinet - 10 November 2016

Report of Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services

Status: For Consideration

Also considered by: Direct and Trading Advisory Committee - 1 November 2016  
Council - 22 November 2016

Key Decision: No

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**Executive Summary:** This report requests that the Committee considers free concessionary parking on select dates at Christmas 2016.

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#### **This report supports the key aims of:**

The effective management of Council resources and supporting and developing the local economy.

**Portfolio Holder** Councillor Matthew Dickins

**Contact Officer** John Strachan Ext.7310

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**Recommendation to Direct & Trading Advisory Committee:** That the recommendation to Cabinet below be considered.

#### **Recommendation to Cabinet:** That

- a) subject to consideration of any views of the Advisory Committee, free parking be provided in car parks and on street parking bays for two Saturdays, 10 and 17 December 2016 preceding Christmas; and
- b) subject to recommendation (a) above, it be recommended to Council that the cost in terms of lost income for free Christmas parking be funded from Supplementary Estimates.

**Recommendation to Council:** That the cost in terms of lost income for any free Christmas parking agreed above, be funded from Supplementary Estimates.

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**Reason for recommendation:** To help encourage shoppers and other visitors to Sevenoaks and Westerham, in the busy shopping period leading up to Christmas 2016.

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## Agenda Item 8

### **Introduction and Background**

- 1 In previous years the Council has helped encourage shoppers and visitors to Sevenoaks and Westerham by giving free parking in car parks and on street parking bays on two Saturdays in the run up to Christmas.
- 2 Unlike in previous years, this year, in light of concerns from traders over parking by shop staff, Sevenoaks Town Partnership is asking for free parking for the first two hours on each of the two Saturdays.
- 3 Because of the operational difficulty in facilitating this, and the potential confusion for the public, Sevenoaks District Council proposes providing “free” all day parking, in line with the arrangements in previous years.
- 4 Regular monitoring will ensure compliance with the maximum stay periods in car parks and on-street, to ensure that space is not monopolised by all-day parking by shop workers. On each Saturday free parking will be promoted for shop workers in the Council Offices staff car park accessed from Gordon Road.
- 5 Relaxing parking charges on Saturday has no impact on Swanley or at Knockholt Station as charges only apply Monday to Friday.
- 6 This is regarded as being of particular importance in light of similar initiatives operated in other towns in neighbouring Districts.
- 7 As in previous years Senico Community Leisure whose parking areas form a part of the Suffolk Way car park have participated in these events, they will be invited to participate again.

### **Background Information**

- 8 The estimated shortfall in income over the two days is estimated at £16,000.

### **Other Information**

- 9 Members are advised that, as in previous years, the Council’s Portfolio Holder for Direct and Trading has allowed free evening parking for Christmas Lights and shopping events in Sevenoaks on Friday 25 November 2016 and in Westerham on Thursday 24 November 2016.

### **Key Implications**

#### Financial

- 10 Shortfall in parking income of £16,000 to be met from Supplementary Estimates.

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

- 11 Management of “overstay” parking is difficult when there is no requirement for a ticket to be purchased and displayed.

Equality Impacts

- 12 There is a low risk that the proposals in this report would have any implications under the Equality Act.

Community Impact and Outcomes

- 13 Free Christmas parking is a local initiative popular with residents, visitors to the district, businesses and traders, and supportive of local economic vibrancy.

Human Rights

- 14 There are no human rights issues or implications.

**Appendices** None

**Background Papers** None

**Richard Wilson**  
**Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services**

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