

#### **Council Tax Support scheme**





#### **Consultation Feedback**

# Survey (Web and hard copy combined)



- Survey included in the following formats:
  - Hard copy within the Consultation booklet
  - Web based survey
- Providing further information towards a quantitative response to the consultation activity
- Ensuring a range of responses from Harrow Residents
- Survey consistent with questions used in Residents Panel Survey
- 12,000 booklets distributed
- Overall 498 surveys completed
  - 152 completed through the web
  - 346 hard copies completed and either returned through freepost or completed whilst attending face to face activity



Que	stions	Yes	No	Not sure
1.	Should people who receive Council Tax Benefit who are in properties with a higher Council Tax charge be asked to pay more?	49%	37%	11%
2.	Should people receiving Council Tax Benefit be given extra benefit for a limited period to help pay their Council Tax when they start work?	57%	31%	8%
3.	Should people who are working receive more Council Tax Benefit to encourage them to increase the number of hours they work?	36%	49%	11%
4.	Should people who can't work be given more Council Tax Benefit than those who could work but are unemployed?	54%	33%	10%
5a.	Should income such as Child Benefit be included as part of someone's income when they claim Council Tax Benefit?	43%	48%	6%
5b.	Should income such as Disability Living Allowance be included as part of someone's income when they claim Council Tax Benefit?	36%	55%	6%
6.	Should other adults living in a household where the council tax payer (and their partner) claims Council Tax Benefit, be asked to pay more towards the Council Tax bill than they do now?	48%	36%	12%
7.	Should people who receive Second Adult Rebate be asked to pay more?	34%	44%	17%
8.	Should people with savings of less than £16,j000 e asked to use these savings to pay their Council Tax?	28%	62%	7%
9.	Do you think there are any groups of people in the community who would be affected more than others if everyone currently on benefit has to pay something towards their Council Tax?	45%	22%	28%



Groups impacted by change				
Survey returns – web and	hard copy			
Unprompted		Prompted		
□People with a disability □Lone parents □People on a low income □Pensioners □Carers		□ People with a disability □ Lone parents □ Families with children □ Carers □ Part time/full time workers □ Single/couples without children		
Summary of feedback sug changes more than other		s why a group may be affected by the		
☐ People with a disability	<ul> <li>Multi impacts of all changes within Welfare Reforms</li> <li>Extra costs due to disability and need for support</li> <li>Less able to work and often on low income</li> </ul>			
□ Lone parents □ Income is strictly limited or have no income □ Because they do not have anybody to help □ Income is very low and unable to earn more				
			5	



Summary of the feedback suggesting reasons why a group may be affected by the changes more than other groups				
People on a low income		People struggling with low income, high inflation, unexpected costs Some earn less and have received less education so unable to get better job Less income would mean less for food and bills		
Families with children		Their higher cost of living Already struggling to make ends meet Low incomes		
Carers		Fixed low incomes which they can't supplement Limited opportunity to supplement income Already struggle to make ends meet Higher cost of living		
Pensioners		Income limited and savings are limited as well Need more consideration on low income normally May have no-one to support them		



#### Should the Council set up a Hardship Fund to support people suffering genuine hardship through the changes to council Tax Benefits?

Yes	65%
No	18%
Not sure	11%



#### **Consultation Feedback**

Face to face activity



- □ Face to face activity included the following
  - Roadshows
  - 'Go to' days
  - Events held in partnership with Voluntary Sector
  - Attendance at Community Group Meetings
  - Discussion Groups
  - Workshops
- Activity included raising awareness of the changes, getting feedback on the changes and understanding of the impact of the changes on individuals and groups in the community
- □ 71 differing levels of face to face activity held and over 4,000 people spoken to
- Encouraged completion of forms and noted all feedback provided through this activity



Question 1	Should people who receive Council Tax Benefit who are in properties with a higher Council Tax charge be asked to pay more?		
Overall Response	Initially many of the groups/individuals felt that, in principle, people who are in properties with a higher Council Tax charge should be asked to pay more. However following discussion the groups/individuals highlighted circumstances that would need to be taken into consideration when making the decision.		
<b>Comments from those</b>	who agreed include:	Comments from those who disagreed include:	
Comments from those who agreed include:  This proposal would be fair Bigger home owners can afford to pay in full or pay more than others Immigrants who are in huge houses and have not paid taxes should pay more If have bigger property could rent out rooms and use that money to pay Council Tax Could downgrade and use money to pay towards Council Tax If everybody works in the house Couple of suggestions suggested phasing the change and make it gradual (introduce a taper) It's a choice to have more children		<ul> <li>□ Many suggested that this proposal should not take place because could affect the following groups because of multiple impacts:         <ul> <li>□ Large families</li> <li>□ People with mental health issues</li> <li>□ People who have inherited properties but on a low income</li> <li>□ May have been made redundant/long term illness</li> <li>□ Families with children</li> </ul> </li> <li>□ Could force people to move and some people may not be able to do so</li> <li>□ People may need larger houses because they have disabilities and need carers, or equipment</li> <li>□ Could cause isolation because people would not be able to afford to go out</li> </ul>	



Question 2	Should people receiving Council Tax Benefit be given extra benefit for a limited period to help pay their Council Tax when they start work?		
Overall Response	The majority of groups/indiv	viduals were in strong favour of the extra benefit	
Comments from those	who agreed include:	Comments from those who disagreed include:	
Comments from those who agreed include:  □ Encourages people back to work □ Would be a disaster if removed as people would get into debt and constantly have to catch up □ Would stop people even thinking about going back to work □ There should be a transition when people start work □ Lots of companies are terminating employment after probation period to save costs of retaining staff and not having to pay for loss of earnings and therefore is required		<ul> <li>□ Small group felt that if working shouldn't get any extra help</li> <li>□ Some felt should be a threshold and how long out of work should be taken into account</li> <li>□ Look at potential earnings, people who receive high wages do not necessarily need the fund</li> </ul>	



Question 3	Should people who are working receive more Council Tax Benefit to encourage them to increase the number of hours they work?		
of groups/individuals agreed however there were general		neard of this extra help when explained the majority d that this extra support should be kept in place all concerns raised about the ability to be able to ecause of lack of full time jobs	
Comments from those	who agreed include:	Comments from those who disagreed include:	
Comments from those who agreed include:  □ Provides incentive for people to increase their hours □ Helps people to avoid being caught in the benefit trap □ Should only be given if person has a family and is earning more □ Hard to get full time work and therefore people struggling to increase their hours □ Sliding income should be considered □ People would be scared to work more as money would be reduced by the Council □ People should get help to increase their hours □ All incentives should be communicated widely so that people know they can claim it		<ul> <li>□ People who are working should not be entitled to more benefits</li> <li>□ There needs to be a time limit</li> <li>□ Why is somebody who is now earning more getting something for nothing</li> <li>□ People need to understand they will be charged as soon as they earn</li> <li>□ Should work hard to pay all of taxes</li> <li>□ Linking Council Tax allowance to working hours would just add to this confusion</li> <li>□ This does not incentivise work at the moment as people are unaware that they can receive this help</li> </ul>	



There was a mixed response to this question. Some of the groups/individuals that were in favour felt that people with disabilities, carers and people with mental health issues may find it more difficult to access work. There was also a strong view that this was not a fair option in the current climate when there was a lack of jobs for those people who do want to work  Comments from those who agreed include:  Comments from those who disagreed include:  Comments from those who disagreed include:  Comments from those who disagreed include:  Not fair to penalise unemployed as the current job market is vey bad.  Unemployed need support.  People do want to work but cannot find it.  Mental health very difficult to diagnose, not physically obvious. Assessors not informed or adequate to assess health.  What about those people who are gradually falling ill.  Unemployed cannot find work and therefore both groups cannot work – should not judge them.  Difficult to access work. There was also a strong work but cannot climate when there was also a strong view that this was not a fair option in the current climate when there was also a strong view that this was not a fair option in the current climate when there was also a strong view that this was not a fair option in the current climate when there was also a strong view that this was not a fair option in the current climate when there was also a strong view that this expense of a fair option in the current climate when there was also a strong view that this was not a fair option in the current climate when there was also a strong view that this expense of a fair option in the current climate when there was also a strong view that this expense of a fair option in the current climate when there was also a strong view that this expense of a fair option in the current climate when there was also a strong view that to work but cannot find it.  Unemployed cannot find to work and therefore both groups cannot work – should not judge them.  Difficult very difficult to diagnose, not p	Question 4	Should people who can't work be given more Council Tax Benefit than those who could work but are unemployed?		
□There should be different bands of income that act as cut off points for different rates of benefit □Long term unemployed with no illness should receive less help □Only if a doctor says that a person cannot work □Carers should be taken into consideration in the group that cannot work □Should introduce levels of severity. Someone on an obvious long term disability should get more □Those who won't work should pay more □Disabled people higher likelihood of being unable to work and this is not necessarily a choice □Disabled people experience disproportionate barriers to work such as employer prejudice, lack of practical □ Not fair to penalise unemployed as the current job market is vey bad □ Unemployed need support □ People do want to work but cannot find it □ Mental health very difficult to diagnose, not physically obvious. Assessors not informed or adequate to assess health □ What about those people who are gradually falling ill □ Unemployed cannot find work and therefore both groups cannot work – should not judge them □ Difficult when don't know the criteria of not being able to work □ How would these people be identified and who would make the decisions	that were in favour felt that mental health issues may fi strong view that this was no		people with disabilities, carers and people with and it more difficult to access work. There was also a cot a fair option in the current climate when there was	
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Question 5a	Should income such as Child Benefit be included as part of someone's income when they claim Council Tax Benefit?		
Overall Response	The responses to this question were fairly even in relation to 'for' and 'against'. Some groups/individuals felt that people should only have children if they can afford them and there were a few that felt that benefits should be capped to the number of children. There were also some very strong feelings that Child Benefit is provided specifically for the support of the child and therefore should not be included		
Comments from those	who agreed include:	Comments from those who disagreed include:	
□Some families will never work and have lots of children because they get benefits □Use Child Benefit only if it cannot be proven to be used on the child □Numbers of children should be considered – many felt that first 2 children should receive and Child Benefit for further children should be included □It is part of a families income and therefore should be included □Paying Child Benefit to wealthy people when people can't afford to pay Council Tax, therefore no future left		<ul> <li>□ No should not use this money as is for the child and that is who the money should be spent on</li> <li>□ Not everyone is abusing the system. People may have more children but work hard, it should not be stopped</li> <li>□ It will affect large families and children</li> <li>□ No should not be used as children's needs may be missed</li> <li>□ Harrow should find another way of dealing with it not penalising children</li> <li>□ Cuts in child benefit already exist to the maximum so anymore will mean child poverty</li> </ul>	



Question 5b	Should income such as Disability Living Allowance be included as part of someone's income when they claim Council Tax Benefit?		
Overall Response	The majority of people felt strongly that Disability Living Allowance should not be included as part of somebody's income when they claim Council Tax Benefit. It was felt that this would affect people who have extra needs, many who are unable to increase their income by working		
Comments from those	who agreed include:	Comments from those who disagreed include:	
Yes this should be included □Should be taken in mostly. Depending on how much DLA they receive.		<ul> <li>□ DLA is assessed on needs, already being used for vital things such as transport, medication, care etc.</li> <li>□ DLA is not liable for tax so should not be used as income</li> <li>□ No, People on DLA because have extra needs, would affect people with mental health needs, could spend more time in hospital</li> <li>□ No as this is to be used for specific things and increased living expenses.</li> <li>□ A deaf person looks fit to work but cannot communicate. Its good to work for social inclusion but disabled people losing benefits and have limitations on jobs available, wheelchair access, access to work schemes</li> <li>□ It's a desperate measure if you include this</li> </ul>	



Question 6	Should other adults living in a household where the council tax payer (and their partner) claims Council Tax Benefit, be asked to pay more toward the Council Tax bill than they do now?		
Overall Response	more in relation to their ear collection of contributions for could disproportionately aff	viduals felt that non dependants could contribute nings. There was, however, some concern regarding rom other adults and a view from a group that this ect disabled people, their families and carers as be living in the family home for longer due to the lack care support	
Comments from those	who agreed include:	Comments from those who disagreed include:	
□Should pay more depending on how many people live there □Non-dependant deductions should increase in relation to earnings □Should bring back the Poll Tax. People on their own have to pay the same as households with many adults living there □Working children should participate, how else will they learn to live? Treat children as adults with separate responsibilities □Every individual is using Council services – why shouldn't they be charged? □Good for savings as they probably have little or no		<ul> <li>☐ If parents on DLA/AA then no deductions should be made</li> <li>☐ Could put other members of the household off going to work – should be encouraging people into work</li> <li>☐ Should remain the same rates due to family friction</li> <li>☐ A lot of children refuse to contribute and parents will struggle to pay</li> <li>☐ Problem to recover contribution from non dependant will occur</li> <li>☐ Felt strongly that would disproportionately affect disabled people, their families and carers as disabled adults are likely to be living in the family home for longer due to the lack of appropriate housing and care and support</li> </ul>	
	eparate bill should be issued	16	



Question 7	Second Adult Rebate is awarded to people who are not entitled to Council Tax Benefit based on their own income, but receive a rebate of up to 25% of their bill because they have other adults living with them who are on a low income. Should people who receive this rebate be asked to pay more?		
· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		on to this question. Some felt that this rebate could self that this should stay as cost is minimal and g costs.	
Comments from those	who agreed include:	Comments from those who disagreed include:	
☐ If the main Council Tax payer can pay then they should with exemptions applied for groups such as the disabled, carers etc. ☐ If the homeowner is on a high income, they should pay full Council Tax. ☐ If it is a low claimed income then get rid of it for new claimants and let fizzle out for existing ☐ Generally in favour however concern that this could disproportionately affect carers ☐ Could be phased out		<ul> <li>□ Everyone in household should pay something towards the Council Tax 1% to 2% more</li> <li>□ Cost to Council is minimal compared to other income support benefit</li> <li>□ Most cases it's a pensioner on pension credit, if she gets charged she will have to put in claim for Housing Benefit which in turn will increase costs for the council</li> <li>□ Low claimed benefit – not worth giving it out as only 68 claims exist</li> <li>□ Saves the council rehousing costs – do not remove this</li> </ul>	



Question 8	Should people with savings of less than £16,000 be asked to use these savings to pay their Council Tax?		
Overall Response	Whilst there were a few that felt that savings of £16,000 should be reduced the majority felt that the level of savings should not be reduced as people have worked hard and been careful with their money to ensure they have savings for times of need.		
Comments from those who agreed include:		Comments from those who disagreed include:	
□£16,000 is a lot of money it is £5,000 for Income Support claimants □£16,000 in the bank means they are quite rich, make the limit £10,000 □Affects everybody across the board □Generally in favour however could penalise for saving in the past □Other people shouldn't have to pay if people have money		<ul> <li>□ No – if change the savings limit this will have a great affect on people as savings are to pay for funeral and medical bills.</li> <li>□ This amount is reasonable, never know what happens in life</li> <li>□ Worked hard to achieve this money shouldn't be penalised for it</li> <li>□ Being penalised for being money smart</li> <li>□ Inconsistencies in the governments proposals they have advised people with £10,000 savings will not pay any tax and then allow Council Tax schemes to bring the savings limit down to enable them to pay more local tax</li> <li>□ If earning then savings should not be used</li> <li>□ No we have always been told to save money and now to do this would be unfair on residents</li> </ul>	



Question 9/10	Do you think there are any groups of people in the community who would be affected more than others if everyone currently on benefit has to pay something towards their Council Tax?		
Overall Response	Many groups agreed that there would be groups in the community who would be affected more than other groups. The majority highlighted people with disabilities as being a group that will be impacted by many changes. Other impacted groups included lone parents, carers, large families and people with mental health issues.		
Groups highlighted as affected more than other groups		Reasons why	
<ul><li>□ People with a disability</li><li>□ Lone parents</li></ul>		<ul> <li>□ Cumulative effect as impacted by other changes as part of welfare reforms, transport costs and more disadvantaged in being able to access employment</li> <li>□ May not have other support mechanisms in place and find it difficult to access part time employment</li> </ul>	
□ Carers		□ Looking after people with disabilities, saving Government money by providing care and receive nothing in return. Difficulties in accessing employment	
☐ Large families		□ Cumulative effect as impacted by other changes as part of welfare reforms – need to ensure children are not affected	
☐ People with mental Health issues		☐ Often on low income and unable to secure long term employment. Require support mechanisms in place to be able to work	
Other groups that were highlighted as being impacted by the changes are asylum seekers, refugees, people over 50 who have lost their jobs, young people, homeless, Voluntary Organisations, low earners, sick people with low savings, single people under 35.			



Question 11	Should the Council create a Hardship fund to support people suffering genuine hardship because of the changes to Council Tax Benefit		
Overall Response	The majority of Groups/Individuals agreed there should be a Hardship fund however nearly all said that it needs to have clear criteria that only provides support to those in need		
Comments from those who agreed include:		Further comments include:	
□For fall through the net cases – maybe limit to 3 applications a year □Criteria for the fund should be tough as everyone will be coming to claim due to changes □Could save money in the long run as it saves people from crisis □Individuals should be assessed (means tested) if they are genuine, fair cases and unlikely to leave the UK □If it is for the vulnerable who really need it □Must be specifically for people in need		<ul> <li>□ Bit contradictory as going to take it away and then giving money back via the fund!</li> <li>□ Where is the money coming from</li> <li>□ Believe it to be charity</li> <li>□ Who is putting the money into this?</li> <li>□ Give it out in the form of a loan</li> <li>□ What is going to happen to people who cannot pay?</li> <li>□ People may have to stop paying Council Tax to feed themselves</li> <li>□ Advertise how to access it and how long it will run for</li> <li>□ Advice is going to be needed on how people can manage their money</li> </ul>	

#### Overview of the feedback from the consultation activity



#### General themes arising from all consultation activity Saving ☐ Many people raised concern with the changes the Government were making and the effect they would have on vulnerable groups and various suggestions put forward that money should be taken money from high earners, banks, large companies paying their tax elsewhere ☐ Suggestions that Council shouldn't be targeting the most vulnerable and burden should be shared. People won't be able to pay. Suggestions included raising Council Tax, reducing waste in the council, use more volunteers in libraries, source the funding from other areas etc. ☐ Concern regarding access to jobs particularly in the current climate and the view that people on **Employment** benefits do not want jobs. ☐ Some groups very willing to work but unable to i.e. Asylum seekers. ☐ Difficulties in accessing jobs for lone parents who need part time work ☐ Difficulties for people with disabilities – disproportionate barriers to work, employer prejudice, access to the workplace Health ☐ These changes will increase anxiety, stress and mental illness and these illnesses in turn hinder the **Effects** ability to get jobs ☐ Changes are attacking people living on the edge already – will cause further illnesses Operational ☐ Can't get information about the help that is available in Harrow ☐ Find it difficult to access services i.e. Jobcentre, CAB or Access Harrow has no signers/interpreters available □ Need a different collection policy for those who cannot pay. ☐ Concern about reliability of Work Capacity assessments Consultation ☐ Suggestions put forward to ensure consultation inclusive ☐ Comments regarding the consultation – mostly positive