

<u>MEETING</u>
POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
<u>DATE AND TIME</u>
TUESDAY 11TH DECEMBER, 2018
AT 7.00 PM
<u>VENUE</u>
HENDON TOWN HALL, THE BURROUGHS, LONDON NW4 4BQ

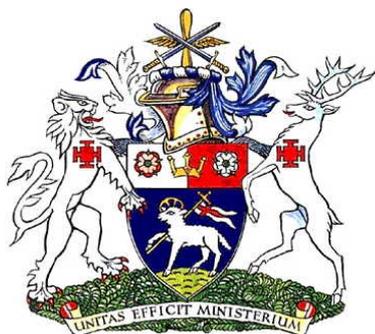
Dear Councillors,

Please find enclosed additional papers relating to the following items for the above mentioned meeting which were not available at the time of collation of the agenda.

Item No	Title of Report	Pages
15.	COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT 2019/20 – REVISION TO COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME	3 - 132

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Policy and Resources Committee

11 December 2018

Title	Council Tax Support 2019/20 – Revision to Council Tax Reduction Scheme
Report of	Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	Yes (see section 1.2)
Key	No
Enclosures	Appendix A – Proposed Barnet Council Tax Support Scheme Appendix B – Council Tax Support Scheme Consultation Findings Report Appendix C – GLA Consultation Response Appendix D – Citizens Advice Consultation Response Appendix E – Equalities Impact Assessment Appendix F – Proposed DCTH/DHP Policy
Officer Contact Details	Allan Clark – Revenues and Benefits Manager allan.clark@barnet.gov.uk

Summary

This paper provides information relating to the proposal of a new Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme, to be introduced in April 2019 and includes analysis from the public consultation carried out between 18th October 2018 and 29th November 2018.

The paper also provides details of the proposed Discretionary Council Tax Hardship and Discretionary Housing Payment (DCTH/DHP) Policy to be introduced alongside the CTS scheme in April 2019.

The report seeks support from members on the recommended CTS scheme and for referral to Full Council.

It also seeks approval from the committee to implement the DCTH/DHP Policy.

Officers Recommendations

The report recommends that the Committee:

- 1. Agree that the proposed Barnet Council Tax Support Scheme as set out in Appendix A should be referred to Full Council for approval.**
- 2. Approve the proposed Discretionary Council Tax Hardship and Discretionary Housing Payment Policy as set out in Appendix F.**

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

- 1.1 The London Borough of Barnet is considering replacing its current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) in 2019/20. The Council has four primary objectives:
 - To move towards a scheme that is more adaptable to Universal Credit (UC) regulations.
 - To mitigate against expected increases in administration costs under UC.
 - To provide opportunity for better collection levels by reducing the monthly rebilling of Council Tax for UC claimants.
 - To reduce the overall scheme costs.
- 1.2 The proposed LCTR scheme requires approval of Full Council and this decision needs to take place at the scheduled 18 December 2018 meeting to allow sufficient time to implement the changes if the scheme is approved.
- 1.3 With the introduction of UC there is a significantly higher volume of income re-calculations for those receiving LCTRS, therefore increasing resources required to administer the scheme.

- 1.4 Maintaining the current scheme into 2019/20 would not only mean that cost reductions could not be realised, but would also increase scheme cost slightly from £23.93m in 2017/18 to £23.99m in 2019/20. This is an increase in cost of £66,389 or 0.3%.

Current Position

- 1.5 The current scheme is based on the Default scheme. This is a complex means-tested scheme with certain types of income compared to a needs allowance which is itself calculated by reference to household circumstances. Since 2012/13, local authorities were permitted to determine their own local scheme for reductions in council tax to replace the council tax benefit scheme. There is a prescribed scheme for pensioner households whereas local authorities are free to determine an appropriate local scheme for working-age households.
- 1.6 For working-age households, Barnet Council has maintained the 2013 scheme and has updated it in line with default regulations, with the exception of the family premium which has been retained.
- 1.7 Cost of current scheme

Cost of current scheme			
Age group	Number of households	council tax support (£/annum)	council tax support (£/week)
All working age	19,146	£14,832,579	£14.90
Pension age	8,230	£9,093,746	£21.25
Total	27,376	£23,926,325	£16.81

Current council tax support cost and level of support

Discretionary Council Tax Hardship & Discretionary Housing Payment Policy

- 1.8 The London Borough of Barnet are looking to update and combine the two currently separate policies for Discretionary Council Tax Hardship (DCTH) and Discretionary Housing payments (DHP).
- 1.9 The key drivers for this new policy was to consolidate the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy and the Discretionary Council Tax Hardship Scheme Policy whilst at the same time providing more detailed and clearer guidelines. These clearer guidelines will benefit both officers (decision makers) and potential claimants by clearly laying out the circumstances where awards are likely to be made.
- 1.10 A change has been made to the application process for DCTH which if agreed by the committee will remove the requirement for applications to be made by the claimant. This will be applied where the decision maker identifies a case

that would benefit from this award from another source; applications will be required in most cases.

- 1.11 There is no further changes to the overall policy intentions of the current policies or additional restrictions to what is being offered within this updated policy.
- 1.12 There is no change to the allocated budget available for those facing hardship. The Council however will keep the impact of the proposed scheme under review and if appropriate consider whether increases to the DCTH budget is appropriate.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Proposed LCTRS Scheme

- 2.1 A report presented to the Urgency Committee on 15th October 2018 considered several modelled options for the new scheme with 'Model 5' being the proposed model for consultation. This report can be viewed [here](#).
- 2.2 The council consulted on the proposed Model 5 for a 6-week period, the full findings and methodology are contained within Appendix B. The consultation was focused on stakeholder's views in the following key areas:
 1. If the Council has set the correct aims by introducing an income banded scheme. And if so, were the levels of banding deemed fair.
 2. If residents agreed with the capital limit (the maximum amount of savings and/or investments) being reduced from £16,000 to £6,000.
 3. If residents agreed with Non-Dependant deductions being simplified.
 4. If residents agreed with the introduction of the Minimum Income Floor for self-employed people.
 5. If residents agreed with the proposal to no longer offset Child Care Costs against earnings.
- 2.3 The key findings of the consultation are summarised below:

All Respondents

- Respondents are in favour of a simplified income banded scheme with 48.53% agreeing. 29.95% didn't agree and the remainder were either not sure or neither agreeing or disagreeing.
- The view on the banded levels were 44.72% disagreeing, 37.1% agreeing and 11.39% neither agreeing or disagreeing.

- Respondents are not in favour of the reduced capital limits with 54.85% disagreeing. 29.54% did agree, 14.77% weren't sure or neither agreed or disagreed with 0.84% not responding to this question.
- The views on changes to non-dependant deductions were mixed with 41.77% disagreeing, 24.05% agreeing and 30.38% neither agreeing or disagreeing.
- Opinion on the introduction of a minimum income floor for self-employed was split with 32.49% neither agreeing or disagreeing, 31.64% disagreeing and 30.38% agreeing.
- The views on removing child care costs from the scheme were mixed with 39.24% disagreeing, 30.80% neither agreeing or disagreeing and 22.36% agreeing.

Current Council Tax Support Recipient Responses

- Respondents are in favour of a simplified income banded scheme with 48.53% agreeing. 26.47% didn't agree and the remainder were either not sure or neither agreeing or disagreeing.
- The view on the banded levels were 42.65% disagreeing, 37.5% agreeing and 11.39% neither agreeing or disagreeing.
- Respondents are not in favour of the reduced capital limits with 55.15% disagreeing. 30.88% did agree, 13.97% weren't sure or neither agreed or disagree.
- The views on changes to non-dependant deductions were mixed with 44.12% disagreeing, 22.06% agreeing and 33.82% neither agreeing or disagreeing.
- Opinion on the introduction of a minimum income floor for self-employed was split with 35.29% neither agreeing or disagreeing, 32.35% disagreeing and 32.35% agreeing.
- The views on removing child care costs from the scheme were mixed with 39.71% disagreeing, 37.50% neither agreeing or disagreeing and 22.79% agreeing.

Additional Comments made by Respondents

Appendix B contains details of the additional comments made as part of the consultation. They have been analysed and grouped into the broad themes shown in the table below.

Nonspecific comments or comments made about situations outside the proposed scheme have been left out of the themed analysis.

Several respondents made comments relating to the key components of the proposed scheme, however as their agreement or disagreement had already been captured in the earlier questions, these were also left out the themed analysis.

Broad Themes of disagreement not already captured in this report	
Themes	Number of comments
Penalising the poorest/most vulnerable / increasing poverty	28
Increasing hardship	8
More protection required for disabled households	8
Penalising the self employed	5
Will result in increased debt including rent and council tax arrears	4
Penalising families	3
Will increase homelessness	3
Will increase stress and mental health issues	2
Social cleansing exercise	2
Not supportive of those caring for others	2
People with kids claiming benefits is putting pressure on others	1
Discriminating against those with children in childcare	1
Penalising lone parents	1
Will increase crime	1

The above suggests the main area of concern with the proposal is that the poorest and most vulnerable are being unfairly treated which will result in hardship. Other issues have been raised and in the main are covered within the EIA (Appendix E).

The Council will look to support those in severe hardship with DCTH being a possible solution. The Council will also monitor applications for DCTH and continue to review the support available as discussed in paragraph 1.12. Where respondents disagreed with the proposed changes they were given the opportunity to suggest alternative methods to achieving the required savings. Those comments have also been analysed and grouped into the broad themes shown in the table below.

Alternative Suggestions to Saving Money	
Themes	Number of comments
Look to wealthier residents for a higher contribution	15

Bring service back in house/end relationship with Capita	14
Reduce staff and or salaries	8
Lobby central government for more funding	4
Reduce support for higher banded properties/increase their tax	4
Don't disregard the value of the claimants home when assessing capital	3
Reduce waste collection	3
Reduce councillor pay/freeze increases	2
Don't provide loans to private companies/Saracens	2
Don't waste money on new offices	2
Greater control over highway maintenance expenditure	2
Get businesses to contribute more	1
Increase Council Tax	1
Don't send land off at subsidised prices	1
Collect parking fines	1
Introduce a tax on road pollution	1
Provide less support to those who don't work	1
Get capital expenditure under control	1
Introduce waste collection charges	1
Generate income from green energy initiatives	1
Share a chief exec with neighbouring boroughs	1
Cut expenditure on consultants/agency staff	1
Change in political leadership	1
Limit expenditure on meetings and travel etc	1

Some of what has been suggested has already been considered within the Councils budget proposal and where appropriate the Council will consider the other points raised as potential areas for savings going forward.

Greater London Authority Response

Appendix B contains the full written response received from the Greater London Authority (GLA), the key points are summarised below with the Councils response where appropriate.

- They are in favour of a simplified income banded scheme, commenting that such an approach should reduce the burden on the Council to recalculate entitlements multiple times a year. They also highlight that it

will improve certainty over the council tax bill UC claimants will be required to pay, enabling greater certainty over their finances.

- They do have concerns over the proposed banding levels, highlighting the fact that working age claimants will on average see a reduction in support by 25% with couples on legacy benefits facing a significant reduction of over 30%
- There is also concern over a 'cliff edge effect' where claimants move into work owing to the proposed bands.

The Council has considered this point and agrees it would not wish to have a scheme that penalised claimants who wish to get into work. When the scheme was modelled the banding levels were set to spread the loss across the whole caseload as evenly as possible. As the scheme looks to determine an award solely on net earnings any other income that the customer may receive through UC or legacy benefits (where appropriate) would be ignored resulting in less of a financial 'cliff edge' than the bands suggest. If a customer does find themselves considerably worse off and in financial hardship following a move into work, the Council would consider an application for a DCTH payment.

- They raise the valid point around research conducted by the New Policy Institute which highlights poorer collection rates within scheme that require more than a minimum 20% contribution.

This point was considered when the schemes were being modelled. The current collection rate from those receiving an award is 90%, the modelling has been carried out assuming a lower 85% collection rate.

- GLA have commented that the move to a £6,000 capital limit will bring Barnet's scheme in line with other London Boroughs, however they are concerned that this could result in a significant rise in some residents' council tax.

The Council agrees that this will be the case, however when capital reduces below £6,000 the resident will be able to reclaim support.

- GLA have mentioned that it would be helpful to know the number of claimants that would be affected by the capital reduction proposal and the average increase in liability as a result.

The modelling identified that 164 households would lose their Council Tax Support Award resulting in an average monthly increase in liability of £67.96.

- GLA have asked that we consider how the changes impact on our vulnerable residents. They have also suggested capping the maximum changes at a lower level for households with families.

The Council has considered the impact their scheme will have on its residents, vulnerable or otherwise. Unfortunately owing to the savings that the Council are required to make it simply cannot afford to propose a more generous scheme. The sections below discuss alternative models considered and the things that were considered as part of the proposed Budget.

- They welcome the proposal to continue with the discretionary council tax relief scheme and ask if more funds will be made available. Section 1.12 of this report deals with this question.
- Finally, the GLA recommend that the Council consider its power under the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 to increase the premium charged for long term empty properties.

The Council is currently considering this as an option to generate additional revenue. Any proposal to increase is likely to be sent to the February 2019 meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee.

Preliminary analysis suggests that an increase in the premium to 100% would generate around £220,000 additional council tax.

Citizens Advice Barnet Response

Appendix B contains the full written response received from the Citizens Advice Barnet (CAB), the key points are summarised below with the Councils response where appropriate.

- They are extremely concerned about the impact the proposed changes will have on vulnerable adults, many of whom are their clients. They advise that from April 2018 and September 2018 4% of their clients experiencing benefit problems specifically had issues with Council Tax Support. 19% of their clients with debt issues had Council Tax debts.
- They feel that the banding levels are unreasonable with specific concerns around the under £500 earned income banding and they perceive this as a deterrent to enter work

The Council has considered this point and agrees it would not wish to have a scheme that penalised claimants who wish to get into work. When the scheme was modelled the banding levels were set to spread the loss across the whole caseload as evenly as possible. As the scheme looks to determine an award solely on net earnings any other income that the customer may receive through UC or legacy benefits (where appropriate)

would be ignored resulting in less of a financial ‘cliff edge’ than the bands suggest. If a customer does find themselves considerably worse off and in financial hardship following a move into work, the Council would consider an application for a DCTH payment.

- They feel the reduction in capital limit is unfair and ask that consideration be given to applying the same limits as exist in other means tested benefits.
- They believe the application of a minimum income floor is wholly unfair and advise that this is something they are currently campaigning against within UC.

The Council has considered the points around the capital limit and minimum income floor. Unfortunately owing to the savings that the Council are required to make it simply cannot afford to propose a more generous scheme. The sections below discuss alternative models considered and the things that were considered as part of the proposed Budget.

- The CAB are supportive of the changes to Non-Dependant deductions with the opinion that the current deductions are outdated.
- CAB do not support the proposed changes to Child Care Costs. They believe this will act as another deterrent to work with those who have had the care costs covered by UC or tax credits likely to see no Council Tax Support award.

The Council has considered this point and carried out further modelling, discussed from paragraph 2.4 following the consultation and owing to savings required it simply cannot afford to include Child Care Costs within its scheme.

Specifically, in response to the point about costs being offset for those receiving UC or tax credits; the Council do not agree with CAB’s opinion that they will likely see no award at all. As the proposed scheme looks purely at earnings any additional UC or tax credits paid to the claimant to support their child care, would be completely ignored within the calculation.

- CAB have asked whether the budget for Council Tax Discretionary Relief will be increased in light of the proposed scheme changes. Section 1.12 of this report deals with this question.

2.4 Analysis of the opinion between those currently claiming Council Tax Support and those not suggests there is no real difference in respondents’ outlook, whether claiming or not, towards the scheme. The table below summaries this.

	Total	CTS recipient	Total	CTS recipient
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	Agree	agree	Disagree	disagree
Income Banding	48.53%	48.53%	29.95%	26.47%
Income banding levels	37.14%	37.50%	44.72%	42.65%
Reduction in Capital	29.54%	30.88%	54.85%	55.15%
Non-Dependant changes	24.05%	22.06%	41.77%	44.12%
Minimum Income Floor	30.38%	32.35%	31.64%	32.35%
Child Care Costs	22.36%	22.79%	39.24%	39.71%
Views on reduction in expenditure	26.58%	31.62%	42.62%	40.44%
Overall views of the proposed scheme	29.03%	29.41%	52.54%	50%

- 2.5 In the main respondents have objected to the banding levels, proposed changes on Capital, Non-Dependant Deductions and Child Care Costs. When the initial modelling was carried out Policy in Practice assisted the Council by analysing current caseload and from this designed banding levels which provided, as far as possible, a relatively even reduction across income levels. The banding was therefore designed in a way that savings could be met across all bands as fairly as possible and is therefore fundamental to the proposed scheme design.
- 2.6 In response to concern around Capital, Non-Dependant Deductions and Child Care Costs the Council has commissioned further modelling from Policy in Practice. They were provided with our latest caseload extract to ensure the modelling took account of any recent changes. It should be noted that the forecasted outturn for 2018/2019 Council Tax Support expenditure has increased from £23.93m to £24.65m, an increase of £720,000.
- 2.7 This updated modelling, referred to as Model 6 was done on the same basis as Model 5 except for the following changes:
- The capital limit would be increased from £6,000 to £10,000 with the current tariff income calculation between £6,000 and £10,000 continuing.
 - Child Care Cost disregards would be included for those on legacy benefits.
 - No changes to non-dependent deduction rates would be made.
- 2.8 The headline finding of the remodelling is that should the Council adopt Model 6 as its scheme then the savings generated would reduce from £3.2m to £1.6m overall, this includes GLA share and doesn't account for non-collection. It is difficult to attribute exact costings to each of the factors within paragraph 2.6

owing to the interdependencies each change has on the other. However, the table below provides an estimate of how the £1.6m reduction is made up.

Element	Percentage reduction in savings
Cost of Capital changes	17%
Cost of Child Care Cost changes	65%
Cost of Non-Dependant changes	17%

- 2.9 Applying the same 85% collection rate as assumed in Model 5 and after allowing for our major preceptors share these changes would result in the Council achieving a £1.1m reduction in cost compared to the forecasted outturn for 2018/2019.
- 2.10 Savings from Model 5 were £2.1m meaning a move to Model 6 would see a reduction in savings of £1m.
- 2.11 Model 5 therefore remains the only scheme that will meet the financial savings target.

DCTH/DHP Policy

- 2.12 The current DCTH and DHP policies are both administered by the same team and in many occasions, assist the same customers. The consolidated policy will therefore provide just one reference point for both applicants and decision makers.
- 2.13 The additional detail within this newly combined policy will provide a more robust reference point for applicants and decision makers.
- 2.14 The removal of the requirement for all claimants to complete a written application for DCTH will provide support for our most vulnerable citizens including those negatively impacted by the proposed changes to the LCTRS. In situations where revenues and benefits staff are made aware of a situation of hardship, they will be able to automatically award DCTH, if they feel appropriate based on other information held.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

Proposed LCTRS Scheme

- 3.1 The Urgency Committee report of 15th October 2018 contained information as to previous alternatives considered and not recommended.

- 3.2 An alternative scheme based on the changes discussed in 2.5 was considered but owing to the additional cost of making these changes this is not recommended.

DCTH/DHP Policy

- 3.3 The status quo of two separate policies was considered but not recommended.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

Proposed LCTRS Scheme

- 4.1 The decision to adopt the scheme will be referred to Full Council on 18th December 2018.

DCTH/DHP Policy

- 4.2 Key staff will be briefed on the policy in readiness for April 2019.
- 4.3 The policy will be published online and shared with key stakeholders such as Citizens Advice Barnet.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1 The recommendation within this report supports the Council's corporate priorities as expressed through the 2018/19 addendum to the Corporate Plan for 2015-20 which sets out the Council's financial position and highlights a further gap between 2018 and 2020 of £41million.

Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 5.2 The council's Council Tax Support Scheme currently costs the authority £24.65m per year.
- 5.3 At its meeting on the 6th March 2018, Full Council approved the MTFs and detailed revenue budgets which included an assumption of £1.4m additional income relating to a change in the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2019/20. Full Council also approved a change in financial strategy and seeks to balance its resources recurrently, ceasing to utilise reserves to fund ongoing expenditure.

- 5.4 Following a further review of the Council's financial position at the July 2018 Policy and Resources Committee, the requirement to identify further savings or increased revenue was presented.
- 5.5 Within the MTFs considered at the Committee, a funding deficit of £9.8m was identified for 2019/20. This was after an assumption of increasing Council Tax by the maximum allowed under regulation. This also assumed all currently proposed savings were fully achieved and that the adverse budget variance for 2018/19 was fully resolved.
- 5.6 The Policy and Resources Committee considered a forecast of the Council's reserves position in June 2018. This highlighted that non-ringfenced revenue reserves were anticipated to reduce from £41.5m to £7.5m by the end of 2019/20. Clearly this level of reduction is unsustainable and action is required to reduce the draw on reserves going forward.
- 5.7 The MTFs presented to this Committee as part of the Business Planning report in item 8 means that Non Ringfenced Revenue Reserves are forecasted to fall to just over £20m. The council's Section 151 officer has made the determination that they should not fall below this level in order to ensure the council has sufficient resilience to adverse events. As such, the use of reserves to negate further budget savings cannot be considered.
- 5.8 The council estimated that it had a funding deficit of £69m over the period 2019-2024 and has been identifying proposals for funding reductions in order to balance this shortfall. As a way of reducing this funding deficit, a further reduction of £0.6m in the cost of the LCTRS is proposed for consideration.
- 5.9 Significant savings from across the council have been put forward and a total of £68.0m of proposals are presented to the Committee for consideration and approval if appropriate at item 8 on this Committee's agenda. This includes the LCTRS proposal. The process of arriving at this level of savings has considered all areas of council activity. Even so, this level is still insufficient to balance the expenditure with the forecast incoming resources for 2019/20 and 2020/21.
- 5.10 Should the recommendation to approve the scheme amendments to full council not be taken, the MTFs will be unbalanced and alternative savings will be required in order to present a legal budget for approval.

Social Value

- 5.11 The LCTRS provides financial support to council tax payers on low incomes by reducing the amount they are required to pay. The DCTH/DHP policy provides

support to our most vulnerable citizens to help meet council tax liabilities and shortfalls in housing costs.

Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.12 Section 13A(1)(a) and (2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 introduced a duty on every billing authority in England to make a scheme specifying the reductions which are to apply to amounts of council tax payable, in respect of dwellings situated in its area, by:
- (a) Persons whom the authority considers to be in financial need, or
 - (b) Persons in classes consisting of persons whom the authority considers to be, in general, in financial need.
- 5.13 The above scheme is referred to as the authority's council tax reduction scheme. Section 67 of the 1992 Act requires that revisions to the council tax reduction scheme are reserved to Full Council for a decision.
- 5.14 Schedule 1A sets out the requirements in relation to adoption or revision of a scheme. Paragraph 2 confirms a scheme must state the classes of person entitled to a reduction and that this may be by reference to income, capital, a combination of income and capital, number of dependents and whether an application has been made. Different reductions may be set for different classes. A reduction may be a discount calculated as a percentage, a set amount, expressed as an amount of council tax to be paid or the whole amount of council tax. The scheme must state the procedure by which a person may apply for a reduction and the procedure for appeal. The scheme must comply with prescribed matters set out by the Secretary of State in regulations. Paragraph 5 confirms that a billing authority must consider whether to revise its scheme or to replace it with another scheme for each financial year. Any revisions or replacement must be made no later than 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement is to have effect. If any revision or replacement has the effect of reducing or removing a reduction to which any class of persons is entitled, the revision or replacement must include such transitional provision as the authority thinks fit. When making revisions to a scheme, paragraph 3 applies. Paragraph 3 requires an authority, before making a scheme, to (a) consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it, (b) publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and (c) consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.
- 5.15 **Section 13A(1)(c)** permits a billing authority to reduce council tax in other discretionary circumstances.
- 5.16 When making policy decisions, the Council must take into account of all relevant material, including financial resources, consultation responses and potential equality impacts in order to reach a decision. This report presents a proposed

model, as well of details of why an alternative model has been discarded based on financial implications. However, this does not preclude Committee from recommending that another option is the most appropriate way forward.

- 5.17 There is a statutory duty to consult on the council tax support scheme. A summary of the details of the consultation responses are set out in the report and the full results are attached as an appendix. Case law has confirmed that when determining whether to change policy, the Council must be receptive to reasonable arguments against the proposals, however this does not simply involve a head count of those for and against the proposals. In the case of withdrawal of support, it will not be surprising if a number of respondents are against the proposal. The Committee must take these views into account and must balance this with other relevant information to decide whether to recommend an option.
- 5.18 Council Constitution, Article 7 (Committees, Sub-Committees, Area Committees and Forums and the Local Strategic Partnership) sets out the responsibilities of the Policy and Resources Committee which includes: To be responsible for Finance including Local taxation.
- 5.19 Council Constitution, Article 4 (The Full Council) sets out the responsibilities of the Council which includes: Setting the Council Tax.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 The risks associated with this report are that vulnerable citizens find themselves with lower levels of financial support. If approved, the DCTH/DHP policy will assist with mitigating hardship to the worst affected. As set out in paragraph 1.12, the level of available DCTH/DHP will be kept under review.

7. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY

- 7.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public-Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies **to have due regard** to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not.
- 7.2 The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 7.3 A full EIA for the LCTRS has been undertaken and can be found at Appendix E. The overall assessment of the proposed scheme is one of a negative significant impact. The tables below provide analysis of how different groups are impacted by the proposed scheme. To help mitigate against any severe financial hardship which the scheme may cause any particular group the

Council will ensure its DCTH/DHP policy is publicised and brought to the attention of key stakeholders such as the Citizens Advice Barnet. It will also keep both the DCTH/DHP policy and this proposed scheme under review.

Households losing more than £5.00 per week, by economic status				
	Universal Credit		Legacy benefits	
Economic status	Number losing over £5/week	% of total cohort losing over £5/week	Number losing over £5/week	% of total cohort losing over £5/week
Employed	990	42.1%	1,611	43.3%
Self-employed	783	72.8%	1,298	73.3%
Out-of-work benefits	836	19.7%	1,182	19.7%
Total	2609	34.1%	4,091	35.6%

Households losing more than £5.00 per week, by household composition				
	Universal Credit		Legacy benefits	
Household type	Number losing over £5/week	% of total cohort losing over £5/week	Number losing over £5/week	% of total cohort losing over £5/week
Single	777	23.7%	1,056	23.5%
Lone Parent	667	30.5%	1,011	29.5%
Couple no children	226	54.2%	306	54.8%
Couple with children	939	52.9%	1,718	57.2%
Total	2609	34.1%	4,091	35.6%

Number of households losing support		
Loss £/week	Universal Credit	Legacy
£5-£10	1471	2277
£10-15	683	1109
£15-20	286	430

>£20	169	275
Total losing more than £5/week	2609	4091

Number of households gaining support		
Gain £/week	Universal Credit	Legacy
£5-10	238	356
£10-15	33	43
£15-20	8	14
>£20	3	3
Total gaining more than £5/week	279	413

8. CORPORATE PARENTING

- 8.1 In line with Children and Social Work Act 2017, the council has a duty to consider Corporate Parenting Principles in decision-making across the council. The outcomes and priorities in the refreshed Corporate Plan, Barnet 2024, reflect the council's commitment to the Corporate Parenting duty to ensure the most vulnerable are protected and the needs of children are considered in everything that the council does.
- 8.2 Care leavers liable for Council Tax will be protected from the proposed changes to the Council Tax Support scheme for up to their first two years of independent living up to the age of 25. This is because the Council committed to providing support to this group through the Care Leaver Council Tax Reduction Policy. The policy was adopted in July 2018, but backdated to April 2018, meaning that all care leavers living independently have relief until at least April 2020. During the period to April 2020 the council will investigate further whether there are any potential unintended consequences for care leavers from this scheme, with a view to having any necessary consequential changes to the Care Leaver Council Tax Reduction Policy in place by April 2020.
- 8.3 Although it has not been possible to analyse the specific impacts of the proposed changes on foster carers, providers of supported lodgings or special guardians, it is not the intention of the Council to cause these groups of people any additional hardship. Foster care allowances, supported lodging allowances and special guardianship allowances will be fully disregarded under the proposed scheme.

- 8.4 The council will always have regard to the Corporate Parenting Principles in considering any applications for discretionary help from foster carers, providers of supported lodgings, special guardians or care leavers.

9. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- 9.1 The consultation results have been included in the main part of this report.

10. INSIGHT

- 10.1 The Council via Policy in Practice has considered the demographic data it holds on current LCTRS claimants. This data was anonymised to protect the identity of the claimants.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None applicable to this report

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Barnet Council Tax Support Scheme Effective 1 April 2019



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Glossary

Capital	Money or other assets owned or jointly owned by a person.
Change of Circumstance	Any change of circumstances affecting entitlement to CTS, including but not limited to changes to income, liability, household members or residence that would affect entitlement to CTS.
Council Tax payer	Person liable to pay Council Tax on the property.
Council Tax Support (CTS)	The London Borough of Barnet's (Barnet) scheme.
Default scheme - Pensioner	The default scheme contained in the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Scheme) (England) Regulations 2012 SI 2886/2012
Banded Scheme - Working Age	Council Tax Support for Working Age customers will be calculated against an income banded scheme and will no longer be in line with the default scheme.
Dispute	Where the CTS recipient disagrees with the amount of CTS awarded or the refusal to award CTS applicant.
Disregards	Deductions allowed against the income.
Earned Income	Has the meaning given with paragraphs 18 and 21 of Schedule 1 of the Prescribed Requirements Regulations.
Excess Income	The amount the taxpayer's weekly income exceeds their applicable amount for pensioner claims.
Extended Reduction - Pensioner	An amount awarded for a period after the applicant or their partner has started work or increased their hours of work and is therefore no longer entitled to a qualifying benefit or qualifying contributory benefit.
Income - Pensioner	Income from all sources not limited to earnings. Some income will be wholly or partly disregarded.
Income – Working Age	Council Tax Support will be calculated solely on earnings to set the appropriate band.
Maximum liability	The maximum liability is the maximum band after any Council Tax discounts or band reductions awarded under the Local

	Government Finance Act 1992. For example, single person discounts or band reductions due to disability.
Non-Dependant	Anyone who lives with you who is over 18 and is not your partner, a dependent child, joint tenant or sub-tenant.
Non-Dependant Deduction	An amount deducted from your entitlement depending on the Non-Dependants circumstances.
Overpayment	Any amount of CTS awarded to which the recipient is not entitled.
Pension Age	The age at which a person is eligible to claim State Pension Credit. Please note the age is changing to reflect the equalisation of pension ages between men and woman and the planned increase in retirement age.
Premium	An additional element forming part of the applicable amount relating to the individual or couple's circumstances. For working age claimants there will be no applicable amounts as an income banded scheme calculates entitlement by categorising income against the correct band.
Prescribed Requirements Regulations	Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 SI 2885 2012.
Protected group	Groups listed in Appendix B will continue to receive up to 100% support with entitlement assessed in the same manner as those of pension age.
Taper	The rate at which CTS is withdrawn if the income including tariff income is greater than the applicable amount or living allowance. Not applicable to working age customers who will have their CTS calculated under a banded income scheme.
Tariff income – Pensioners (Default)	Income generated by savings and capital between the lower and upper capital thresholds.
Work	Employed or self-employed.
Working Age	The age below which a person or couple is eligible to claim State Pension Credit.
1992 Act	Local Government Finance Act 1992.

1 Introduction

The London Borough of Barnet's ("LBB") Council Tax Reduction Scheme is based on the default scheme and prescribed requirements regulations **for pension age customers**, except where the contrary is set out within the scheme. Definitions and detail from the regulations are not replicated in this document and the detail can be found by following the links below.

[Council Tax Reduction Schemes \(Prescribed Requirements\) \(England\) Regulations 2012 SI 2885/2012 \(as amended\)](#)

[Council Tax Reduction Schemes \(Default Scheme\) \(England\) Regulations 2012 SI 2886/2012 \(as amended\)](#)

The scheme for **working age applicants** will no longer be based on the default scheme and will calculate the CTS award using an income banded scheme. It has the following features:

- The number of calculations following changes in Universal Credit will be greatly reduced under the banded scheme. Only changes that alter the banding group will be applied. This reduces the regular monthly changes brought about by Universal Credit therefore reducing the possibility of monthly rebilling.
- Only earned income will be used in the calculation within the banded scheme. All other income will be disregarded. I.e. Disability Living Allowance, War Pensions and Child Benefit will continue to be disregarded in the calculation.
- For working age claims, the weekly liability will be reduced by the Non-Dependant deduction.

2 Classes of Persons

2.1 Classes of persons excluded from the scheme

Classes of persons to be excluded from the scheme are as set out in the prescribed requirements regulations, including persons treated as not in Great Britain and persons subject to immigration control.

2.2 Classes of person entitled to a reduction under this scheme

Pensioners

Classes A-C Pensioners who fall within any of classes A to C in the prescribed requirements regulations.

Working age persons

Persons who are not pensioners who have no earned income will fall into income band 1 of the table below.

Persons who are not pensioners who have earned income will receive a maximum level of support depending on what earnings threshold they fall into, as per the table below. Earned income will be calculated net of income tax, national insurance and 50% of pension contributions, there will be no other deductions.

Income Band	Discount off CT liability	Earnings threshold (monthly)
1	72.00%	No earnings
2	52.00%	<£500
3	44.00%	£500.01-£800
4	36.00%	£800.01-£1100
5	28.00%	£1100.01-£1400
6	20.00%	£1400.01-£1700
7	12.00%	£1700.01-£2000

Persons in receipt of Universal Credit will have their Council Tax Support calculated using the earnings verified on the Universal Credit notice.

Persons not in receipt of Universal Credit will be required to evidence their circumstances, such as earnings.

Persons who do not have any earned income will have all other income disregarded and be placed in Band 1 of the above table and receive a maximum award of 72%.

3 Maximum Council Tax Support for the purposes of calculating eligibility for support under this scheme and amount of reduction

3.1 Maximum Council Tax Support under this scheme: For classes A to C, the maximum council tax reduction is as set out in regulation 29 of the default scheme.

3.2 Maximum Council Tax Support under this scheme: For persons who are not pensioners the maximum Council Tax Support is calculated as per section 2.2. Non-dependant deductions will be calculated as per section 4.

4 Non-dependant deductions: pensioners and persons who are not pensioners

The non-dependant deductions for pensioners (classes A –C) are as set out in the prescribed requirements regulations.

The non-dependant deductions for working age from 1st April 2019 are as set out in appendix B.

5 Amount of reduction under this scheme

5.1 Amount of reduction under this scheme

Council Tax Support will then be calculated as per section 2.2.

5.2 Where a working age person is not in receipt of earned income, the award is

- the actual liability for the Council Tax.
- less 28%
- less any non-dependant deductions set out in appendix B

5.3 Where a working age person is in receipt of earned income, the award is

- the actual liability for the Council Tax
- less the maximum Council Tax Support, depending on earnings threshold as per the table below
- less any non-dependent deductions set out in appendix B

Income Band	Maximum Council Tax Support	Earnings threshold (monthly)
1	28.00%	No earnings
2	48.00%	<£500
3	56.00%	£500.01-£800
4	64.00%	£800.01-£1100
5	72.00%	£1100.01-£1400
6	80.00%	£1400.01-£1700
7	88.00%	£1700.01-£2000

6 Capital

The capital rules for calculating eligibility for a reduction are as set out in the default scheme, save that for working age – where capital exceeds £6,000, there will be no entitlement to Council Tax Support.

7 Extended reductions and qualifying conditions for an extended reduction

Extended reductions and qualifying conditions for extended reductions for those of pensionable age will be as set out in the default scheme.

8 Procedural Matters

8.1 Applications

CTS will only be paid upon receipt of an application. Applications must be made in writing and received by LBB's Revenues and Benefits Service, or received electronically via LBB's

website or in some other format as LBB may decide. If a request for CTS is received by the Revenues and Benefits Service by any means including one that is not in the correct format LBB will invite the applicant to complete an appropriate application. If the applicant does so and it is received within one month of being asked to do so then the application date will be the date the original request was received.

If a claim is made for Housing Benefit and the person claiming is also liable for Council Tax at the same dwelling then the Housing Benefit claim will be treated as a claim for Council Tax Support unless within fourteen days of receipt of confirmation of the award from LBB, the customer advises LBB in writing that they do not wish to claim.

For those of working age, where an application is defective or incomplete and the applicant or the person acting for them has not supplied the information requested or properly completed an application form within one month (or such longer period as LBB considers reasonable) of being asked to do so then LBB will decide that the applicant no longer wishes to apply for a reduction.

Where following a change of circumstance the person receiving a reduction is asked to supply evidence or information in support of their claim and fails to do so within one month (or such longer period as LBB considers reasonable) then the CTS award will be amended based upon an adverse inference of the information held from the date the change of circumstances occurred. This could lead to any award being ended.

Where an application is made for Universal Credit, Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance (Income Based) or Income Related Employment and Support Allowance and the Department of Work and Pensions or the CTS applicant makes LBB aware of this fact within 4 weeks of them becoming entitled to one of the above benefits then the date of application will be treated as made on date they become entitled to one of the above benefits.

Applications for CTS can be made up to 13 weeks in advance prior to an event that would entitle them to CTS.

8.1 Backdating an award

For those of Pensionable age the rules for backdating a claim are set out in the default scheme and prescribed requirement regulations.

For those of working age a claim can be backdated for a maximum of 6 months if continuous good cause for failing to apply sooner can be shown. All applications must be in writing.

9 Effective date of a change of circumstance

For those of Pensionable age the effective date of a change of circumstance is as set out in the default scheme.

For those of working age the effective date of a change of circumstances is as set out Regulation 107 of the Default regulations. However, where an applicant is required to notify a change of circumstances and:

- (a) the change has been notified more than one month after the change occurred, or such longer time as LBB considers reasonable; and

(b) it was reasonably practicable for the change to be notified within this period; and

(c) the new decision on the reduction is advantageous to the applicant; then

the new decision on a reduction will take effect on the date of notification.

10 Appeals

If you disagree with our decision about your council tax reduction, in some cases you will be able to appeal to the Valuation Tribunal. The Tribunal is independent of LBB.

You can appeal to them regarding LBB's decision about:

- whether you are entitled to a council tax reduction
- how much of a reduction LBB have awarded you under the local scheme.

The Tribunal cannot hear appeals about what is LBB's scheme, only about the way the scheme has been applied in your case.

The stages to making an appeal are:

1. You must first contact LBB in writing explaining why you believe the decision to be wrong. LBB have 2 months to reply to your contact.
2. If LBB do not agree with your reasons for the decision being wrong you can then appeal to the Valuation Tribunal.
3. If you decide to appeal, you must contact the Valuation Tribunal within 2 months of LBB's decision and include a copy of the decision with your appeal form. You can either submit an electronic appeal form, download a form to complete offline, or contact the Valuation Tribunal to have them send you an appeal form.
4. If LBB have failed to respond to your contact at point 1 above within 4 months you can refer your matter to the Valuation Tribunal without LBB's decision.

Further details can be obtained from the Valuation Tribunal at the following link. You will be able to download the appeals form or complete the online form from this link also. Should you wish to contact the Valuation Tribunal their contact details can also be obtained from the link below.

<https://www.valuationtribunal.gov.uk/your-appeal-type/council-tax/council-tax-reduction/>

11 Discretionary Reduction see Part 3 of Schedule 1 of the default scheme

An application to the authority for a reduction under section 13A(1)(c) of the 1992 Act must be made –

- (a) In writing.

(b) By means of an electronic communication (see part 4 of Schedule 1).

(c) Via LBB's website.

The applicant must state why the request is being made and supply such evidence and information as the Council may require in support of the request.

If for any reason the request is not in a form that LBB can accept then the applicant will be supplied with a suitable form.

12 Time and manner of granting relief and recoveries / overpayments

Where the Council Tax payer is entitled to an increase or decrease in their reductions following a reported change of circumstance, LBB will issue a substitute demand notice taking into account the increase or decrease in liability.

LBB will:

- (a) Recover over-entitlement of council tax support – this will be treated as an underpayment of Council Tax and collected via Council Tax enforcement methods;
- (b) Take recovery action according to the circumstances of the applicant;
- (c) Credit the Council Tax account with any underpayment of CTS.

Effective from 1 April 2019

Appendix A Protected Groups

Protected group
Where claimant or partner receives a War Pension, or a War Widow(ers) pension, or a War Disablement Pension or a regular payment under the armed forces compensation scheme.

Appendix B Non-Dependant deductions

Description	Deduction
Gross income greater than or equal to £200.00 per week.	£11.00 per week
Gross income less than or equal to £199.99 per week.	£5.00 per week
Where the claimant or their partner are in receipt of the care component of Disability Living Allowance at the middle or highest rate, receiving the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment or receive the Carer Premium.	£0.00 per week

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Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

Final Consultation Report

18th October 2018 to 29th November 2018
Consultation

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

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1. Consultation Detailed Findings - Respondents

As is usual practice, the drafting of a new Council Tax Support Scheme has been subject to a formal public consultation. This report sets out the full findings from the council's consultation. The findings will be considered by Committee on 11th December 2018.

Technical details and method

In summary, the consultation was administered as follows:

- The Consultation was open for six weeks, from 18th October 2018 until 29th November 2018
- The consultation was published on Engage Barnet <http://engage.barnet.gov.uk> together with a consultation document, questionnaire and draft Council Tax Support scheme which provided detailed background information.
- Support documents and evidence for the assumptions used within the proposals were published online at Engage Barnet
- Respondent's views were gathered via an online survey. Paper copies and an easy read version of the consultation were also made available on request.
- The consultation was widely promoted via the council's council website; Twitter; Facebook; Area Forums and through library drop in sessions.
- Statutory bodies and key stakeholders were contacted directly, i.e. Citizens Advice Barnet, Barnet Mencap, Mind in Barnet, Gingerbread and the Adults and Communities department of Barnet Council to take part in the consultation.

The questionnaire was developed to ascertain residents' and other stakeholder's views on the proposed scheme and views on how the service may be delivered in the future. In particular the consultation invited views on the following:

- If the Council has set the correct aims by introducing an income banded scheme. And if so, were the levels of banding deemed fair.
- If residents agreed with the capital limit (the maximum amount of savings and/or investments) being reduced from £16,000 to £6,000.
- If residents agreed with Non-Dependant deductions being simplified.
- If residents agreed with the introduction of the Minimum Income Floor for self-employed people.
- If residents agreed with the proposal to no longer offset Child Care Costs against earnings.

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- If residents agreed with the reduction in costs of the scheme to help with Barnet's budget gap.

In order to enable further understanding and in-depth analysis the questionnaire also included:

- Open ended questions, where respondents were invited to write in any comments on the reason behind some of their answers and how they felt the council could have done things differently whilst still protecting valuable services.
- Key demographic questions to help understand the views of different demographic groups.

Throughout the questionnaire and where applicable hyperlinks were provided to the relevant sections of the consultation document. Those respondents who elected to receive a paper copy were also sent the consultation document and a paper questionnaire.

1.1 Response to the consultation

A total of 237 questionnaires and responses have been completed. 237 questionnaires were completed by the general public, interested groups and statutory bodies.

136 (57.38%) of respondents are currently in receipt of Council Tax Support, representing less than 1% of the 28,000 Council Tax Support recipients.

1.2 General public and stakeholder response and profile from questionnaire

Of the 237 public questionnaires responses that were received 228 responses were through online questionnaire, 9 paper questionnaires were returned. The Figure below shows the profile of those who responded.

Figure 1.1: General Public Sample Profile (Below)

Stakeholder	Number	%
Resident	200	84.39%
Business	0	0%
Resident and business based in Barnet	3	1.27%
Public sector organisation and representatives	0	0%
Voluntary/community organisation	0	0%
Other	2	0.84%
Prefer not to say	1	0.42%
Not answered	32	13.50%
Total	237	100%

Most respondents to the consultation were residents of Barnet – 84%. 32 of the 237 respondents (13.50%) chose not to answer this question which identified the type of stakeholder they were responding as.

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The chart below shows the demographic profile of those who responded to consultation questionnaire in terms of key demographics compared to the population of Barnet. Those who responded to the consultation closely match Barnet’s population profile in terms of gender for female respondents but a lower response from male respondents. In terms of age, respondents in their mid-30s to mid-50s are slightly over represented. Those between 16 – 34 are significantly under represented.

In terms of ethnicity, significantly more white residents responded however each category tapers the Barnet population as seen below.

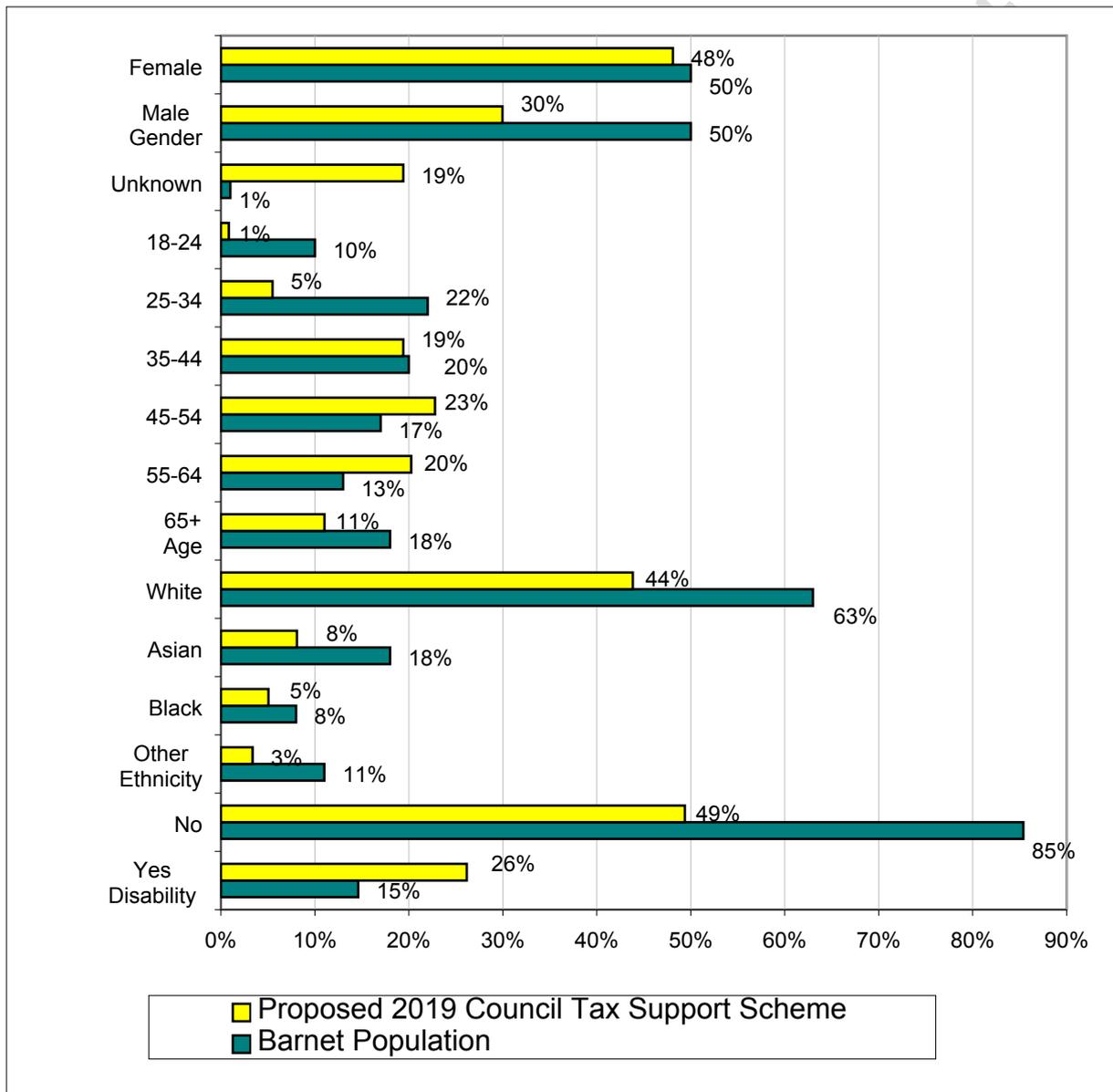


Figure 1.2: General public consultation sample profile – key demographics (above)

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

1.3 Protected Characteristics

The council is required by law, Equality Act 2010, to pay due regard to equalities in eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people from different groups.

The protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

To assist us in complying with the duty under the Equality Act 2010 we asked the general public consultation respondents to provide equalities monitoring data and explained that collecting this information will help us understand the needs of our different communities and that all the personal information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be stored securely in accordance with our responsibilities under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Figure 1.3: Protected characteristic sample profile

Protected Characteristic	Number	%
Faith		
Agnostic	0	0.00%
Atheist	1	0.42%
Baha'i	0	0.00%
Buddhist	4	1.69%
Christian	52	21.94%
Hindu	3	1.27%
Humanist	0	0.00%
Jain	1	0.42%
Jewish	16	6.75%
Muslim	20	8.44%
Sikh	0	0.00%
No religion	30	12.66%
Prefer not to say	26	10.97%
Other religion/belief (please specify)	3	1.27%
Not answered	81	34.18%
Total	237	100%

Pregnancy		
Pregnant	1	0.42%
On maternity leave	0	0%
Not pregnant	109	45.99%
Prefer not to say	2	0.84%

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Not answered	125	52.74%
Total	237	100%

Is your gender identity different to the sex you were assumed to be at birth?		
Yes, it's different	1	0.42%
No, it's the same	172	72.57%
Prefer not to say	23	9.70%
Not answered	41	17.30%
Total	237	100%

1.4 Interpretation of the results

In terms of the results of the questionnaire it is important to note that:

- The survey was self selecting and is therefore not a representative sample of the general population.
- The responses provide an important indication of where there may be particular strength of feeling.
- Where percentages do not add up to 100, this may be due to rounding, or the question is multi coded. All open-ended questions that invite respondents to write in comments, are multi-coded and therefore add up to more than 100 per cent.
- All open-ended responses to the public consultation have been classified based on the main themes arising from the comment, so that they can be summarised.

1.5 Calculating and reporting on results

The results for each question are based on “valid responses”, i.e. all those providing an answer (this may or may not be the same as the total sample) unless otherwise specified. The base size may therefore vary from question to question.

2. Consultation Detailed Findings - Results

The consultation outlined that Barnet's Council Tax Support scheme had become outdated and needed to be revised to bring in line with the introduction of Universal Credit along with reducing the overall cost of the scheme in line with Barnet's budget gap proposals. To do this a simplified income banded scheme was proposed. The consultation focused questions in the following key areas

- The aims and objectives of introducing an income banded scheme
- The main changes that will impact recipients
- How residents felt the Council could save this money elsewhere

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2.1 Views on the key components of the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme

The objectives of the scheme are to ensure Barnet operates a fit for purpose Council Tax Support scheme that provides an effective streamlined service. All whilst reducing the overall cost of the scheme in line with Barnet’s budget gap proposals. The consultation set out that the council wishes to simplify the way in which Council Tax Support is calculated and reduce the overall cost of the scheme. Underneath this vision are six components of how we will seek to achieve our vision.

2.1.1 To what extent respondents agree or disagree with each of the components?

Respondents were asked if they agree with the council’s proposed six key components within the proposal.

- The Figure below shows a mixed response to the components with the level of agreement varying from 48.53% to 22.36%.
- The most supported component, with 48.53% of respondents strongly agreeing or tended to agree was “Introducing an Income Banded Council Tax Support Scheme”. 29.95% of respondents disagreed with this component.
- In contrast, the least supported component with 29.54% was “The maximum Capital limit being reduced from £16,000 to £6,000”. 54.85% of respondents strongly disagreed or tended to disagree with this aim. This was closely followed by the “Child Care Costs no longer being offset against earned income” which received the lowest support at 22.36% support compared to 39.24% of residents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.
- The figures in the table below are agreed and disagreed only therefore don’t total 237 responses and 100% as the remaining figures are made up of any one of the following; Neither agree nor disagree; not sure or not answered.

Figure 2.1: The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the six key components of the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme (below)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of these components?	Agree		Disagree	
	%	Number	%	Number
Introducing an Income Banded Council Tax Support Scheme	48.53%	115	29.95%	71
The income levels within each income band	37.14%	88	44.72%	106
The maximum Capital limit being reduced from £16,000 to £6,000	29.54%	70	54.85%	130
Simplify non-dependant deductions with the introduction of two flat rates	24.05%	57	41.77%	99
Introduction of the Minimum Income Floor for self-employed people.	30.38%	72	31.65%	75
Child Care Costs no longer being offset against earned income	22.36%	53	39.24%	93

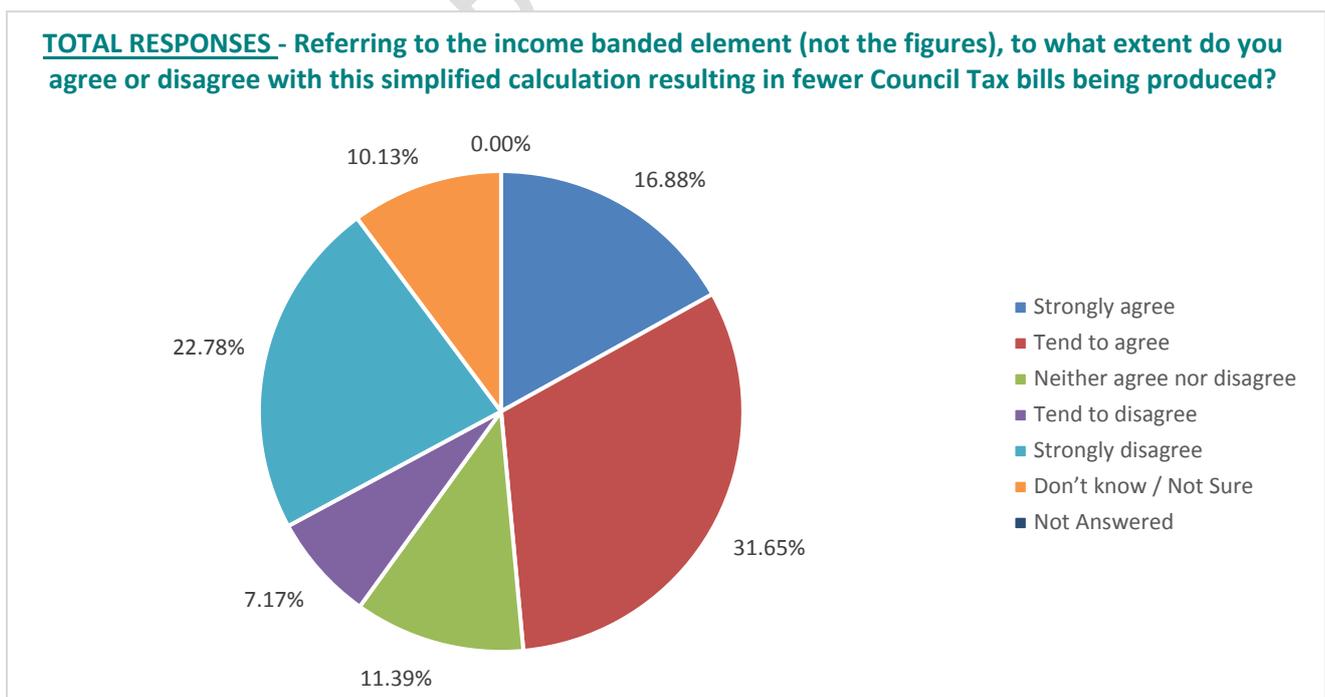
Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

The detailed response for each for each aim can be seen below.

Figure 2.2: The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the aim to introduce an income banded scheme in place of the current complex means tested scheme (below)

Referring to the income banded element (not the figures), to what extent do you agree or disagree with this simplified calculation resulting in fewer Council Tax bills being produced?		
	%	Number
Strongly Agree	16.88%	40
Tend to agree	31.65%	75
Neither agree nor disagree	11.39%	27
Tend to disagree	7.17%	17
Strongly disagree	22.78%	54
Don't know / not sure	10.13%	24
Not Answered	0.00%	0
Total	100%	237

Figure 2.3: Chart showing the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the income banded scheme being introduced (below). Second chart depicts responses for Council Tax Recipients only. These account for 136 of the 237 total responses.



Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

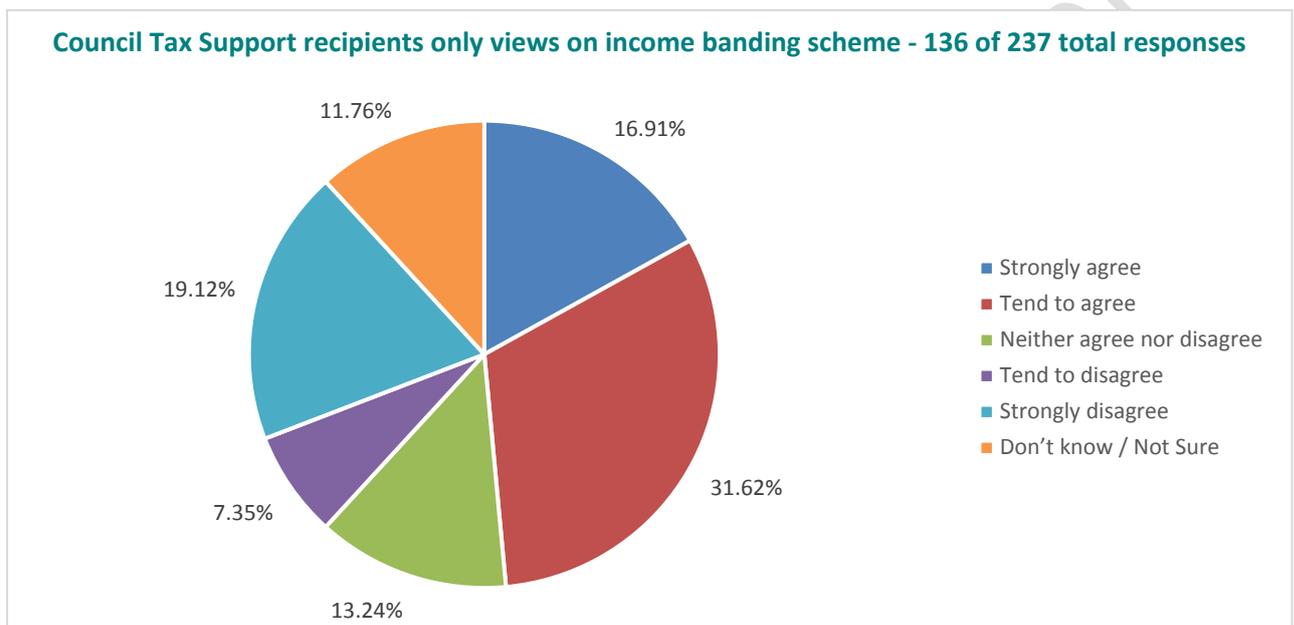


Figure 2.4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the earning band levels that have been identified in the table above? (below).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the earning band levels that have been identified in the table above?		
	%	Number
Strongly Agree	16.46%	39
Tend to agree	20.68%	49
Neither agree nor disagree	11.39%	27
Tend to disagree	11.81%	28
Strongly disagree	32.91%	78
Don't know / not sure	6.75%	16
Not Answered	0.00%	0
Total	100%	237

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

Figure 2.5: Chart showing the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the earning band levels within each income band (below). Second chart depicts responses for Council Tax Recipients only. These account for 136 of the 237 total responses.

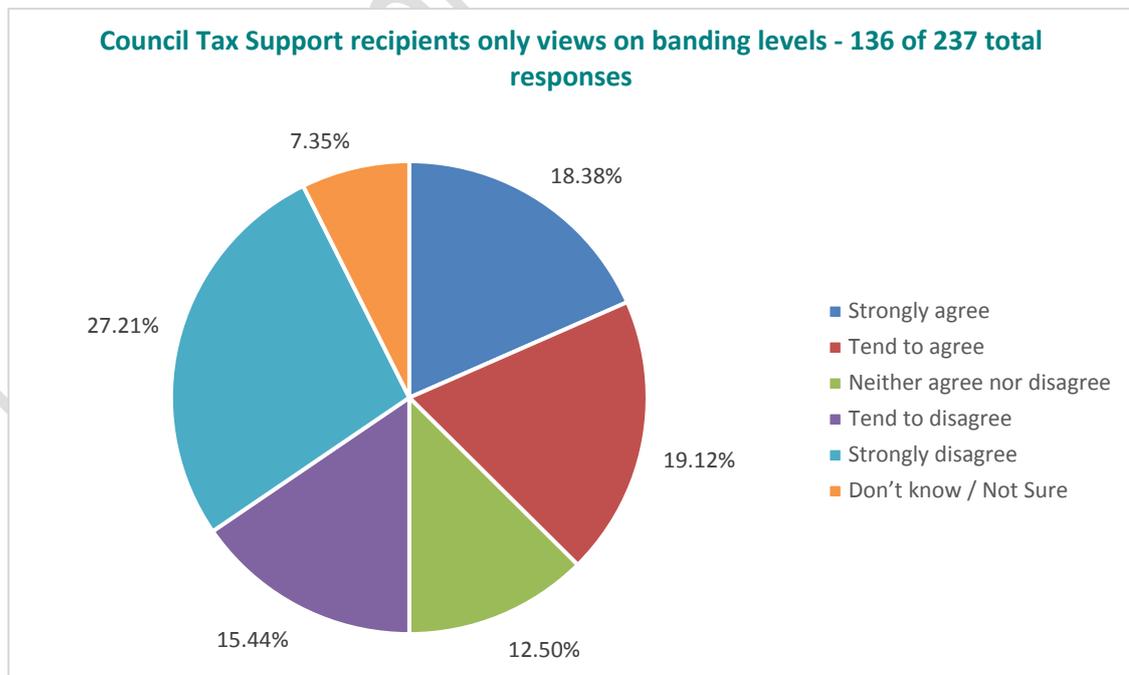
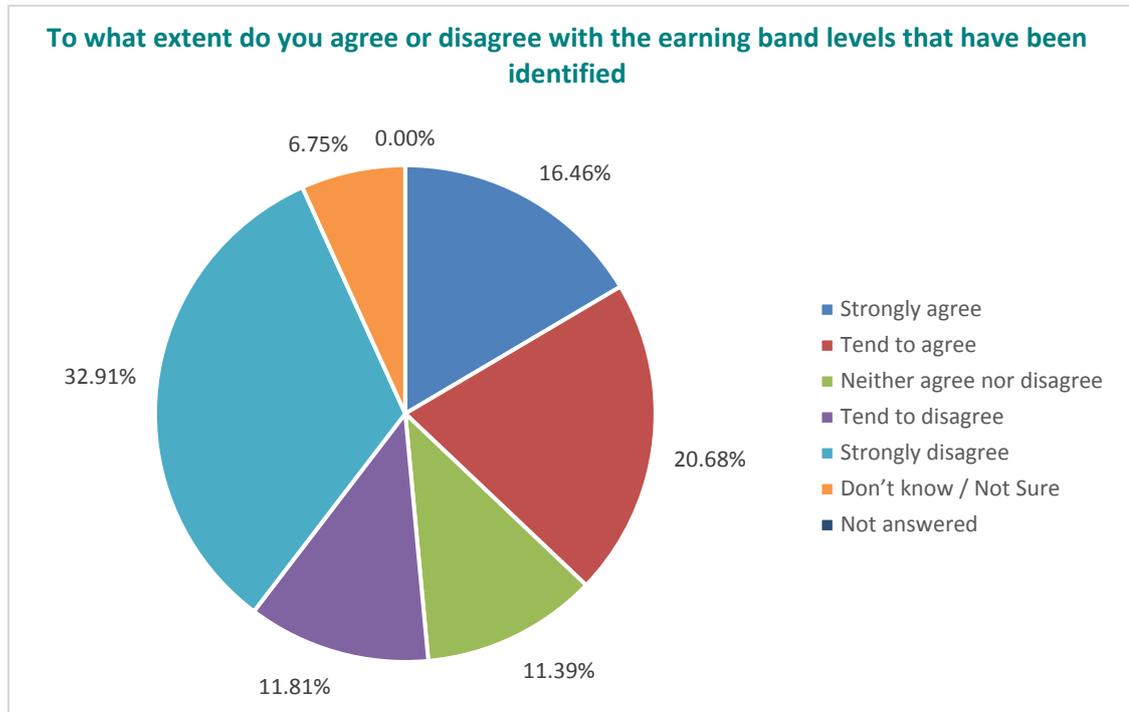
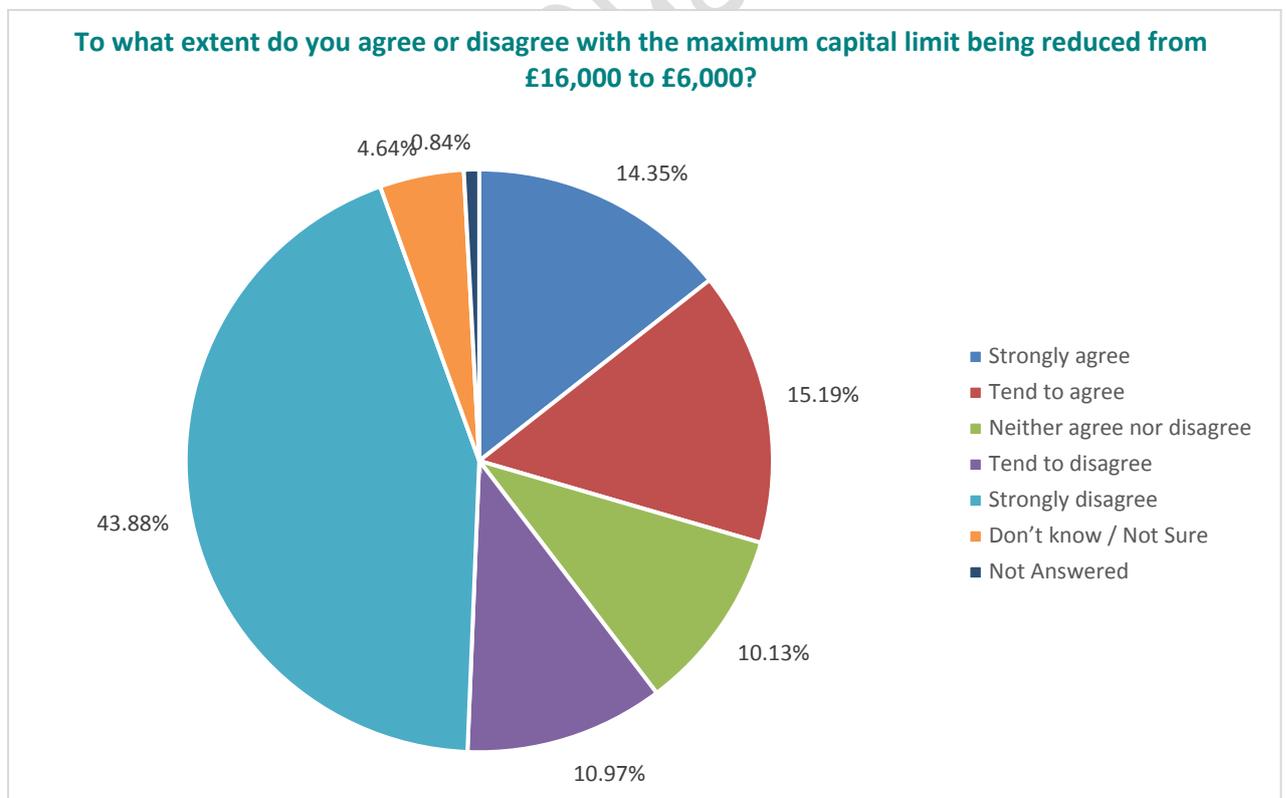


Figure 2.6: The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the aim to reduce the capital limit from £16,000 to £6,000 (below)

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the maximum capital limit being reduced from £16,000 to £6,000?		
	%	Number
Strongly Agree	14.35%	34
Tend to agree	15.19%	36
Neither agree nor disagree	10.13%	24
Tend to disagree	10.97%	26
Strongly disagree	43.88%	104
Don't know / not sure	4.64%	11
Not Answered	0.84%	2
Total	100%	237

Figure 2.7: Chart showing the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the aim to reduce the capital limit from £16,000 to £6,000 (below). Second chart depicts Council Tax Recipients only. These account for 136 of the 237 total responses.



Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

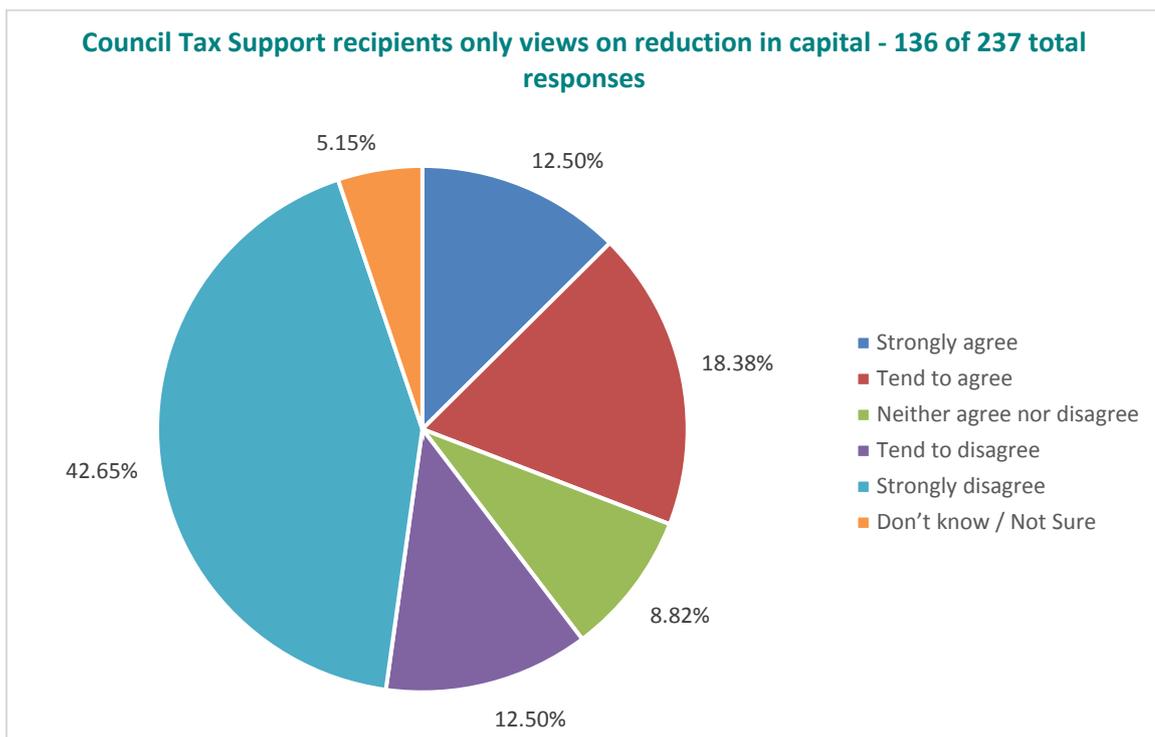
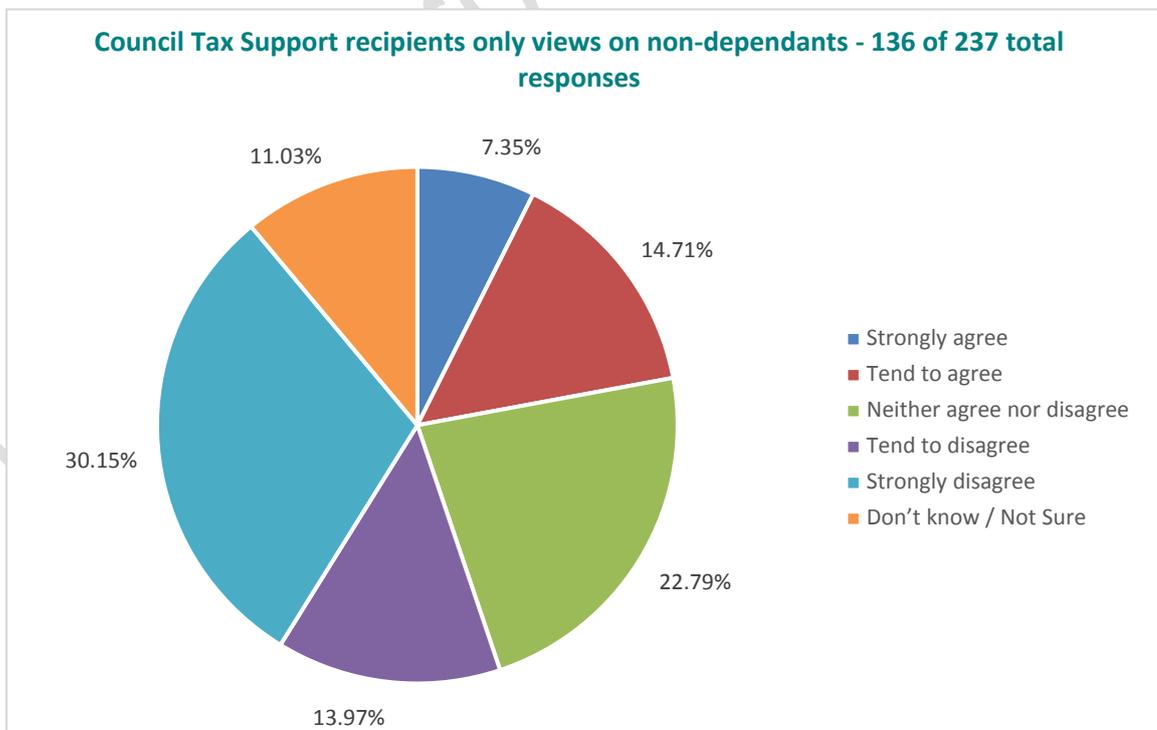
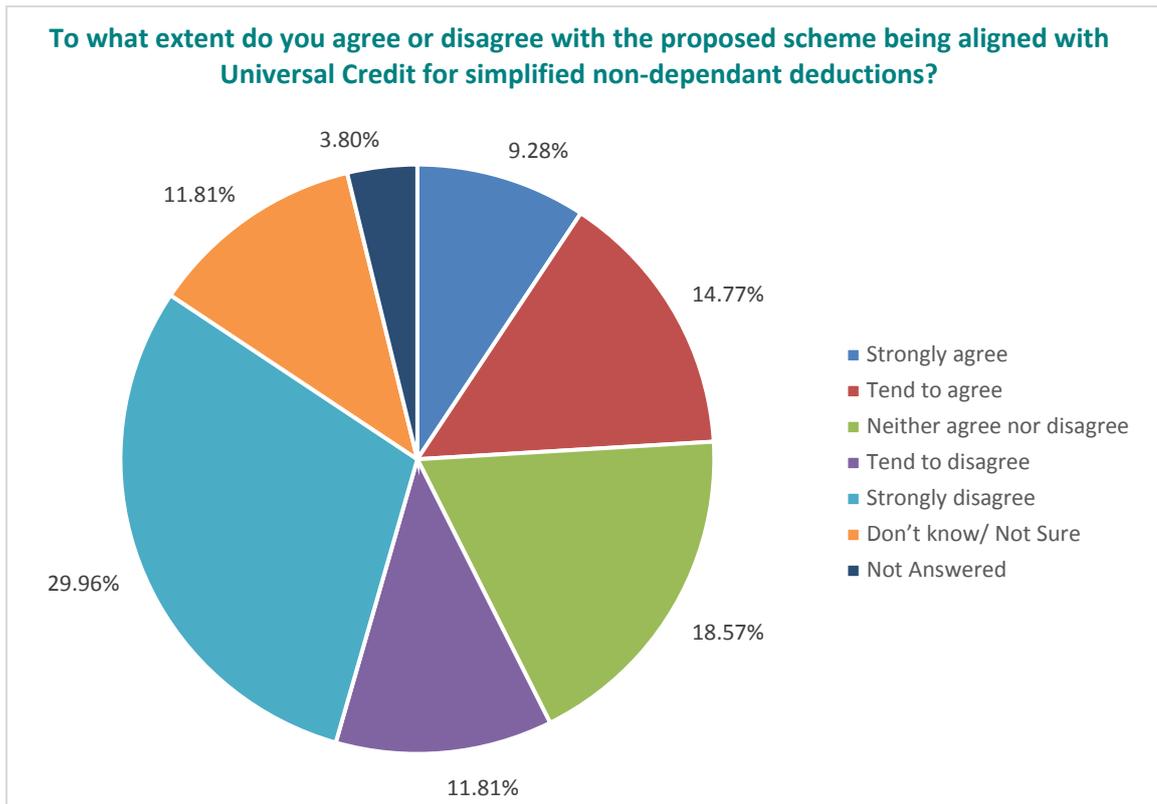


Figure 2.8: The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the aim to introduce simplified non-dependant deductions (below)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with simplified non-dependant deductions?		
	%	Number
Strongly Agree	9.28%	22
Tend to agree	14.77%	35
Neither agree nor disagree	18.57%	44
Tend to disagree	11.81%	28
Strongly disagree	29.96%	71
Don't know / not sure	11.81%	28
Not Answered	3.80%	9
Total	100%	237

Figure 2.9: Chart showing the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the aim to introduce simplified non-dependant deductions (below). Second chart depicts Council Tax Recipients only. These account for 136 of the 237 total responses.

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

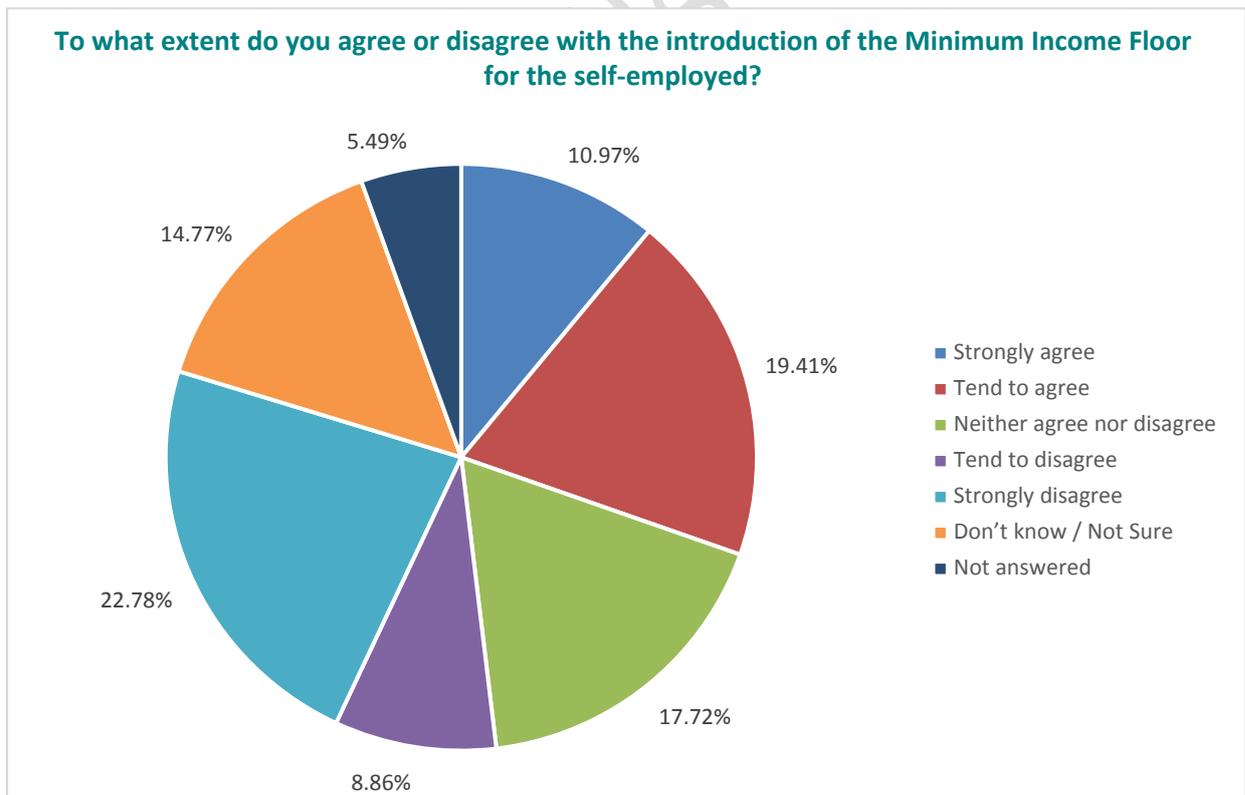


Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

Figure 2.10: The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the aim to introduce a Minimum Income Floor for the self-employed (below)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the introduction of the Minimum Income Floor for the self-employed?		
	%	Number
Strongly Agree	10.97%	26
Tend to agree	19.41%	46
Neither agree nor disagree	17.72%	42
Tend to disagree	8.86%	21
Strongly disagree	22.78%	54
Don't know / not sure	14.77%	35
Not Answered	5.49%	13
Total	100%	237

Figure 2.11: Chart showing the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the introduction of a Minimum Income Floor (below). Second chart depicts Council Tax Recipients only. These account for 136 of the 237 total responses.



Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

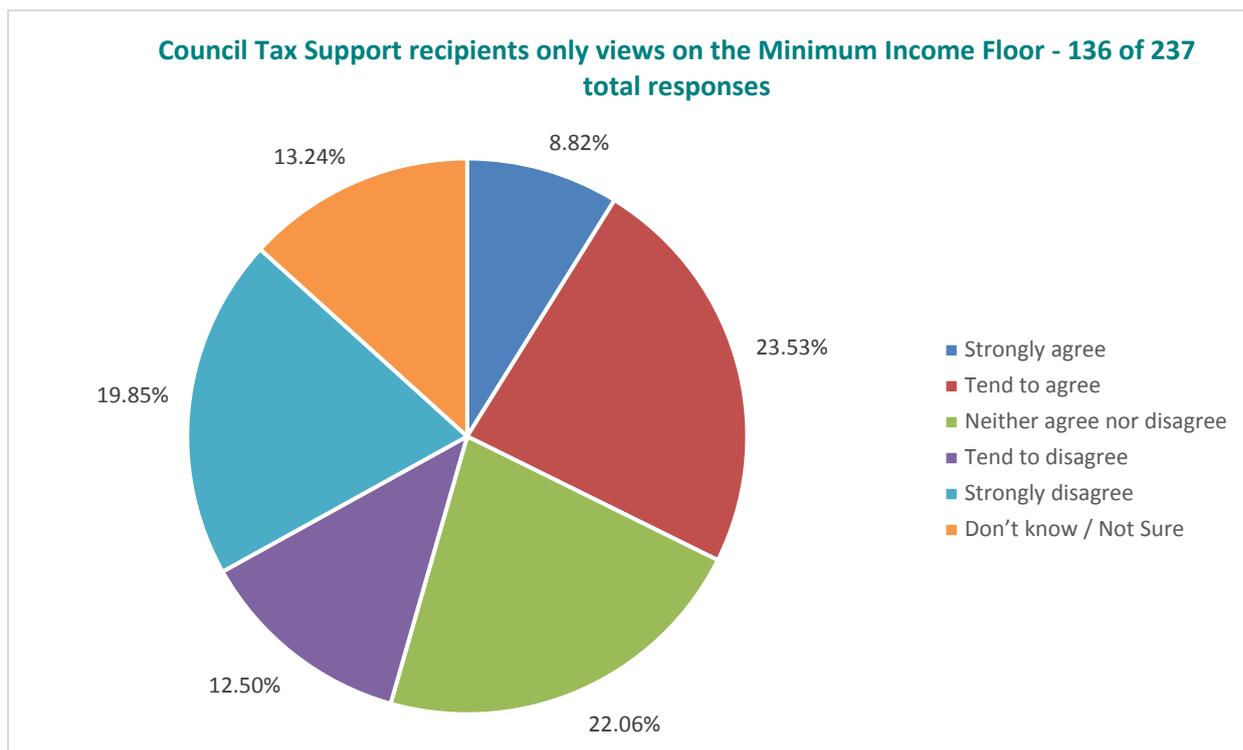


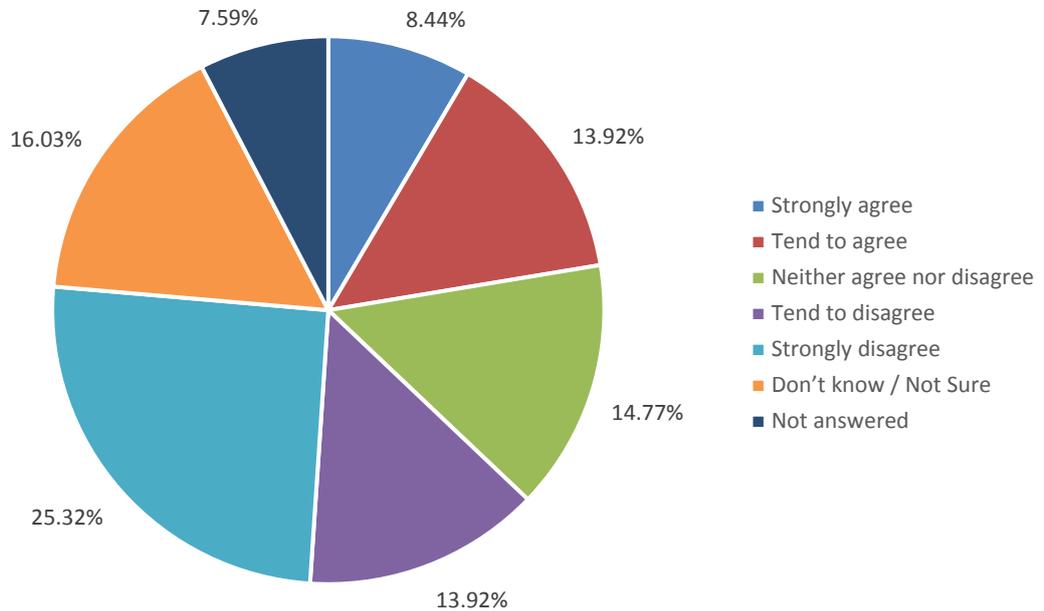
Figure 2.12: The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the aim to no longer offset child care costs against income when calculating Council Tax Support claimants will receive (below)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the introduction of the Minimum Income Floor for the self-employed?		
	%	Number
Strongly Agree	8.44%	20
Tend to agree	13.92%	33
Neither agree nor disagree	14.77%	35
Tend to disagree	13.92%	33
Strongly disagree	25.32%	60
Don't know / not sure	16.03%	38
Not Answered	7.59%	18
Total	100%	237

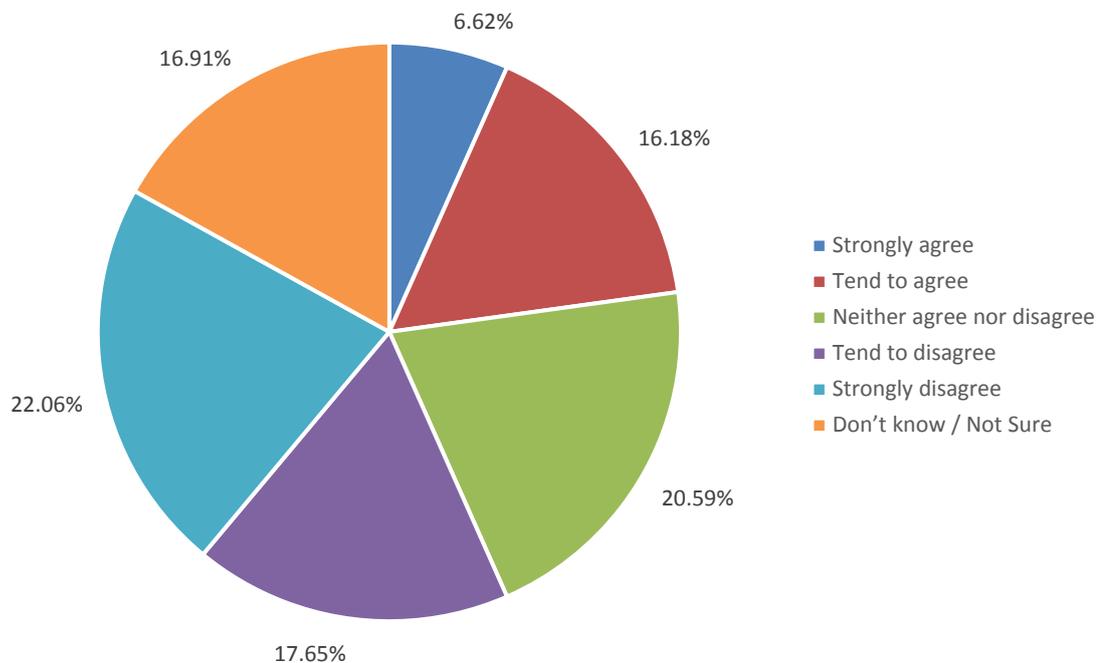
Figure 2.13: Chart showing the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the aim to no longer offset child care costs against income when calculating Council Tax Support claimants will receive (below). Second chart depicts Council Tax Recipients only. These account for 136 of the 237 total responses.

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the new scheme no longer offsetting child care costs against income when calculating the Council Tax Support claimants will receive?



Council Tax Support recipients only views on Child Care Costs - 136 of 237 total responses



Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

2.1.2 Ranking of responses

The responses have been ranked in order, with the most agreed being 1st and the least agreed 6th. A second table illustrates how the table looks if you focused on the number of respondents who disagreed.

Figure 2.14: The extent to which respondents agreed with the six key components of the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme (below)

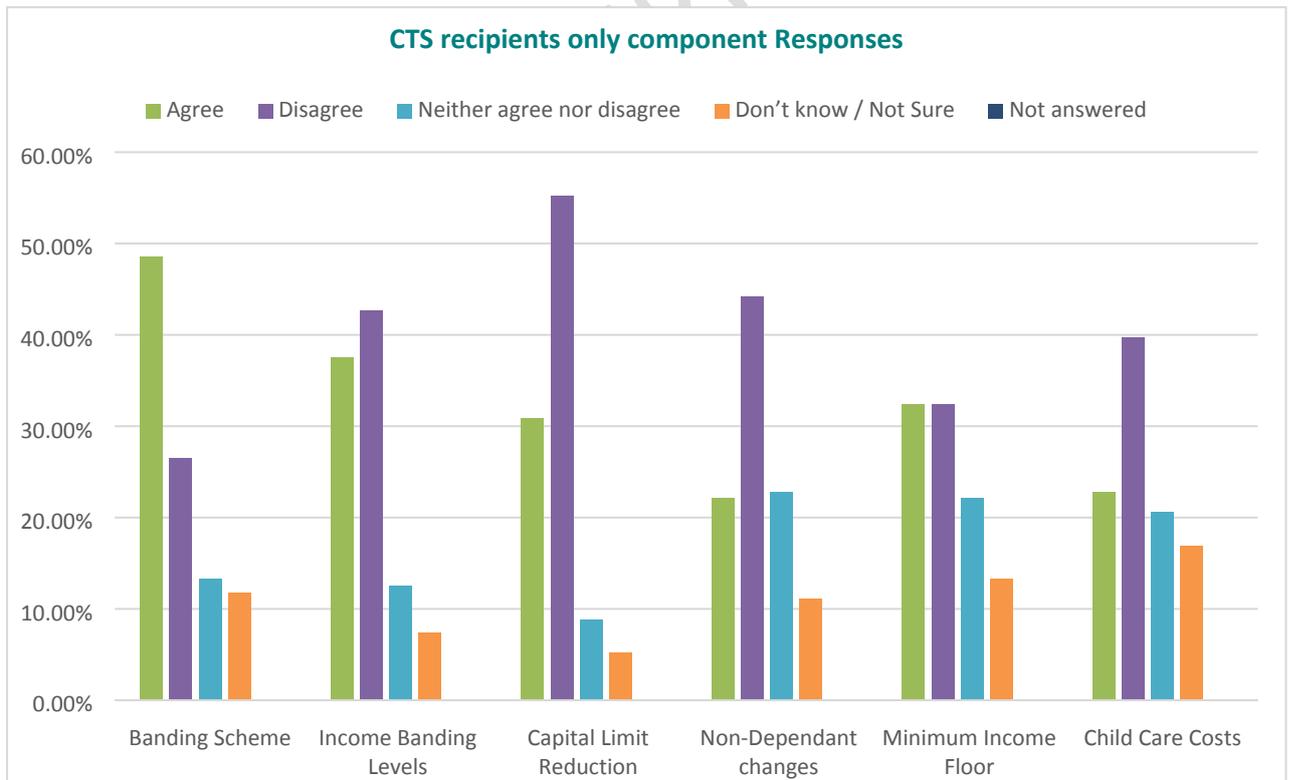
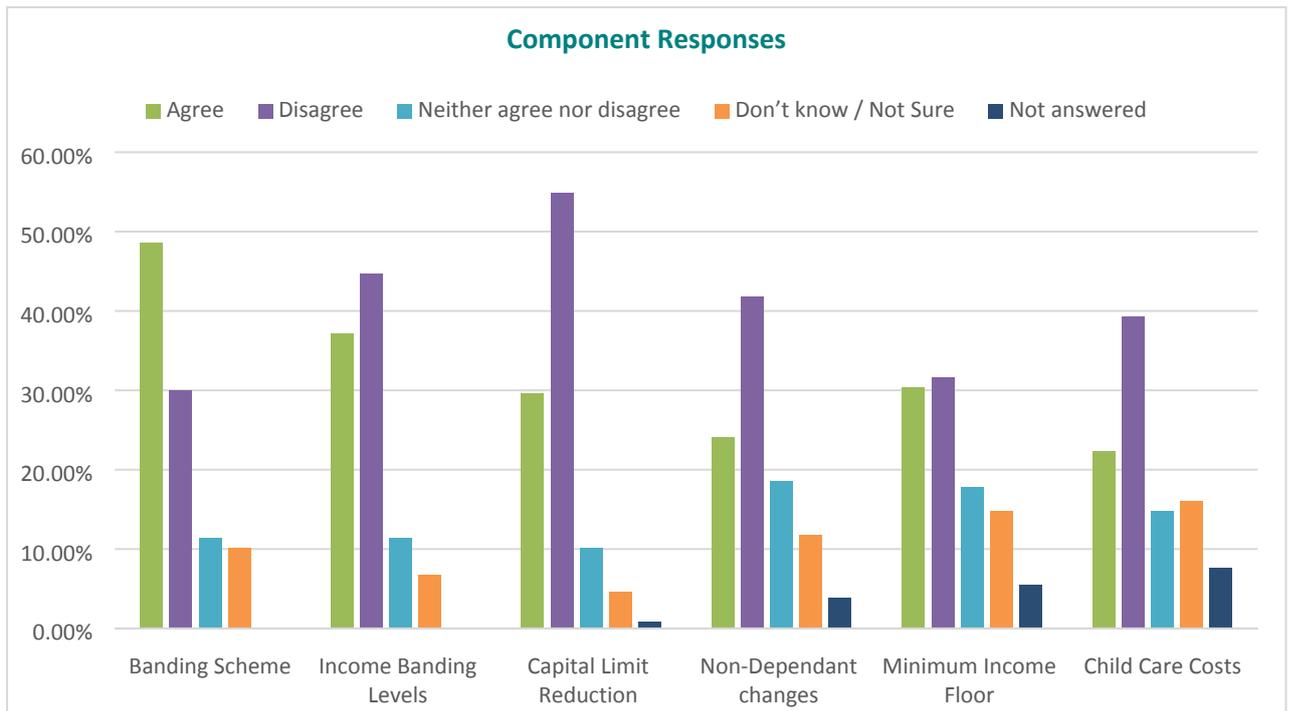
Position	Component	Strongly Agreed or Tend to Agree %
1 st	Income Banding Scheme design	48.53%
2 nd	Income Banding Scheme band amounts	37.14%
3 rd	Minimum Income Floor	30.38%
4 th	Capital Limit reduced from £16,000 to £6,000	29.54%
5 th	Simplified Non-Dependant deductions	24.05%
6 th	Removal of Childcare Disregards	22.36%

Figure 2.15: The extent to which respondents disagreed with the six key components of the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme (below)

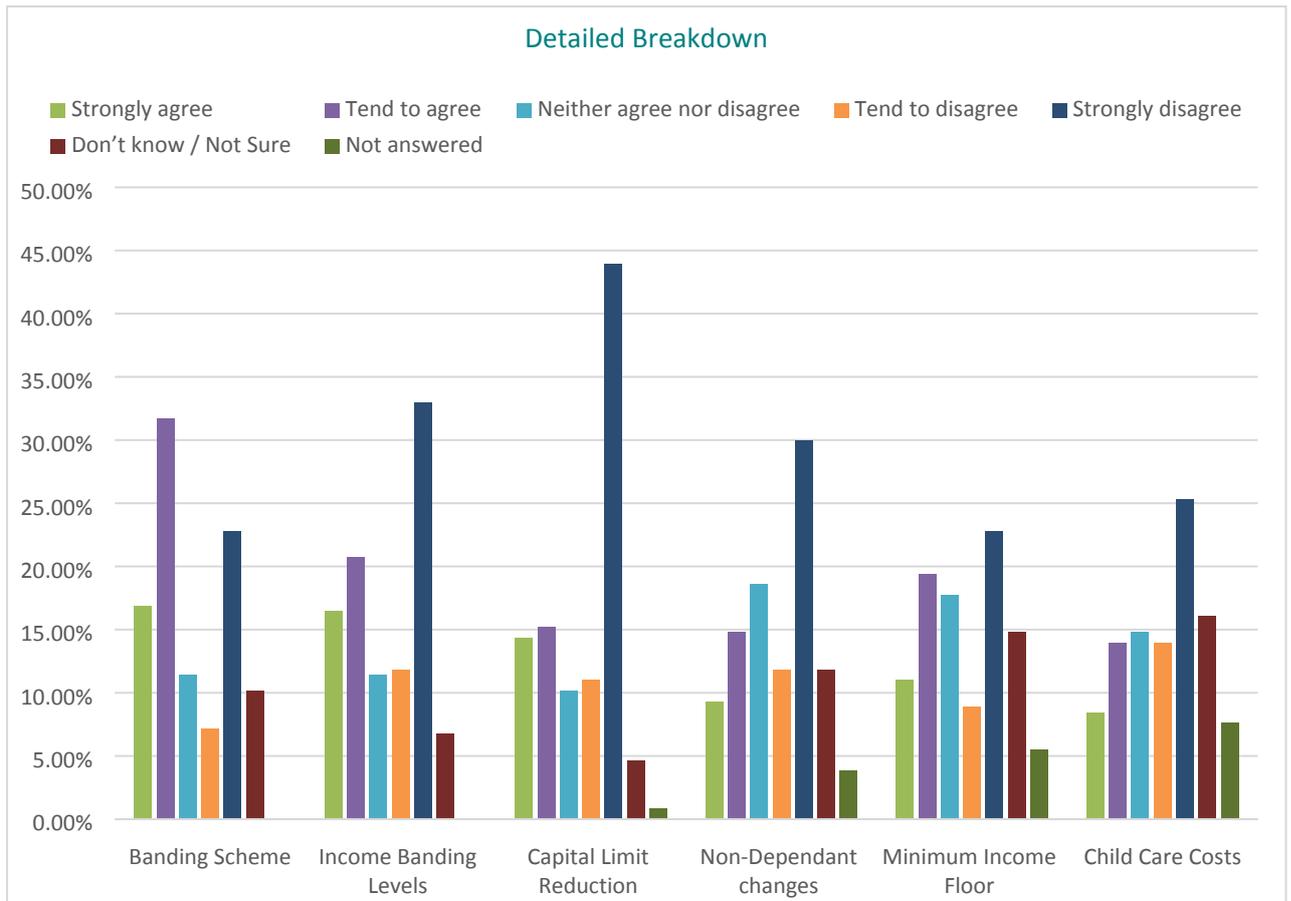
Position	Component	Strongly disagree or tend to disagree %
1 st	Capital Limit reduced from £16,000 to £6,000	54.85%
2 nd	Simplified Non-Dependant deductions	41.77%
3 rd	Removal of Childcare Disregards	39.24%
4 th	Income Banding Scheme band amounts	37.14%
5 th	Minimum Income Floor	35.47%
6 th	Income Banding Scheme design	27.33%

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

Figure 2.16: Graph showing how the responses compare collectively (below)

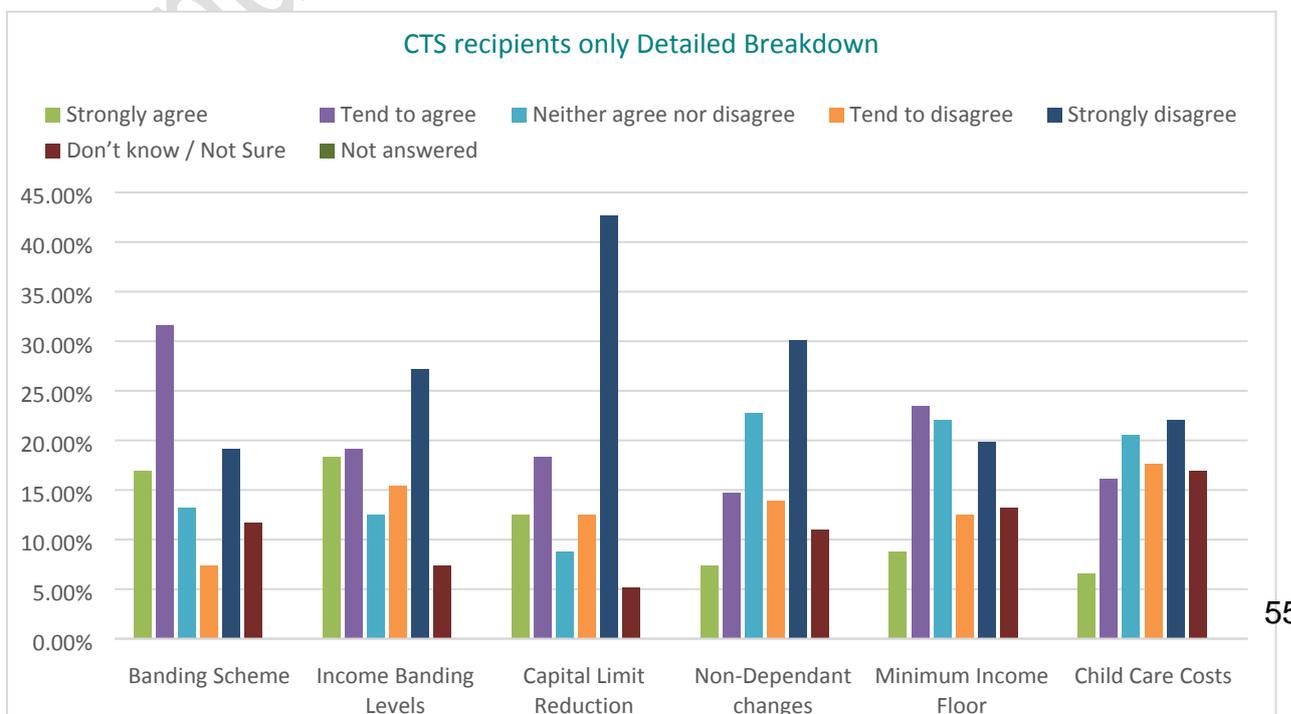


Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019



2.2 Views on responses about the proposed Council Tax Support scheme

The above graph illustrates the overall responses to the 6 key components. Analysis on these components is detailed later in the document.



Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

2.1.3 Views on Income banding

Respondents were asked if they agreed with the proposal of a simplified income banding scheme.

- The Figure below shows that just under half (48.53%) of respondents agreed with the introduction of an income banded scheme, 29.95% did not agree.
- 27 respondents (11.39%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal.
- 24 respondents (10.13%) either did not know or did not answer the question

Figure 2.17: If respondents agreed with the assumption “Do you agree with the introduction of an income banded scheme?” (below)

Do you agree with the introduction of an income banded scheme	%	Number
Yes	48.53%	115
No	29.95%	71
Neither agree nor disagree	11.39%	27
Don't know/not sure	10.13%	24
Not Answered	0%	0

Respondents were also asked if they agreed with the level of income threshold within each band.

- The Figure below shows that 37.14% of respondents agreed with the levels whilst 44.72% disagreed.
- 27 (11.39%) respondents neither agreed nor disagreed
- 12 respondents (6.98%) either did not know or did not answer the question

Figure 2.18: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the earning band levels that have been identified? (below)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the earning band levels that have been identified in the table above?	%	Number
Agreed	37.14%	69
Disagreed	44.72%	73
Neither agreed nor disagreed	11.39%	18
Don't Know	6.75%	12
Not Answered	0%	0

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

2.1.4 Views on the reduction in capital limit from £16,000 to £6,000

One of the key components of the proposed Council Tax Support scheme was to reduce the capital limit from £16,000 to £6,000.

Respondents were asked if they agree with the council's view on reducing the capital limit.

- The Figure below shows that there was just under 30% support for this proposal, however there was a much larger percentage of 54.85% who disagreed suggesting this is a highly disputed component.
- Of the 54.85% of respondents who disagreed a large percentage of 43.88% strongly disagreed. This was also mentioned frequently in the additional comments question.

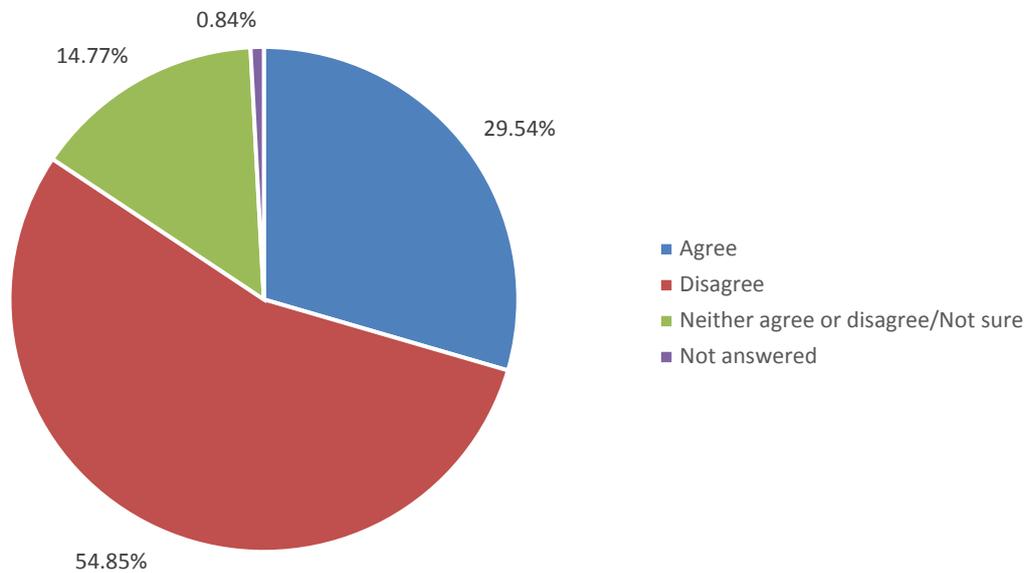
Figure 2.19: The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the proposal to reduce the capital limit from £16,000 to £6,000 (below)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of statement?	Agree		Disagree	
	%	Number	%	Number
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the maximum capital limit being reduced from £16,000 to £6,000?	29.54%	70	54.85%	130

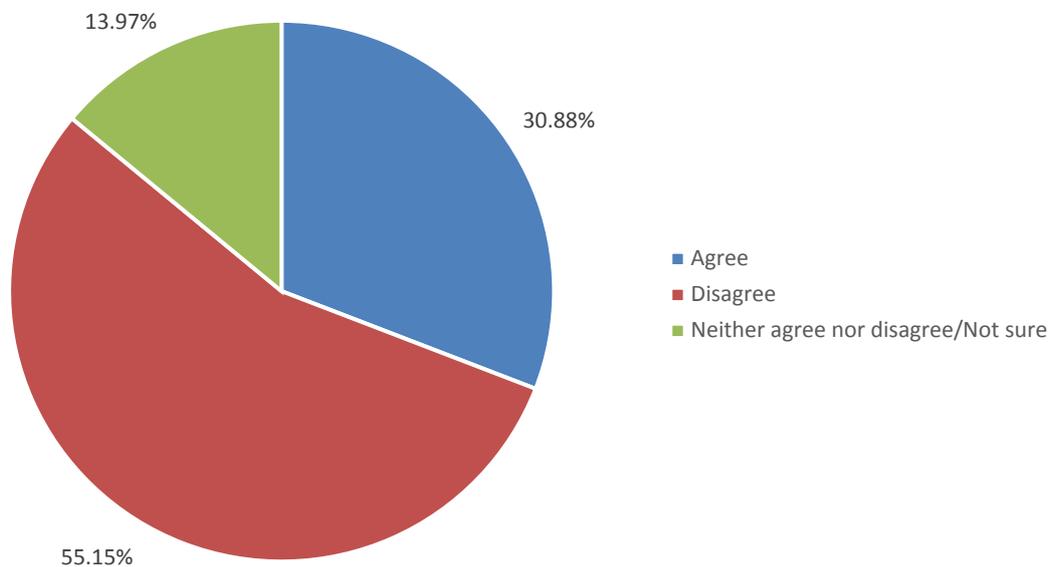
Figure 2.20: Chart showing the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the proposal to reduce the capital limit from £16,000 to £6,000 (below)

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the maximum capital limit being reduced from £16,000 to £6,000?



CTS recipients only views on Capital reduction



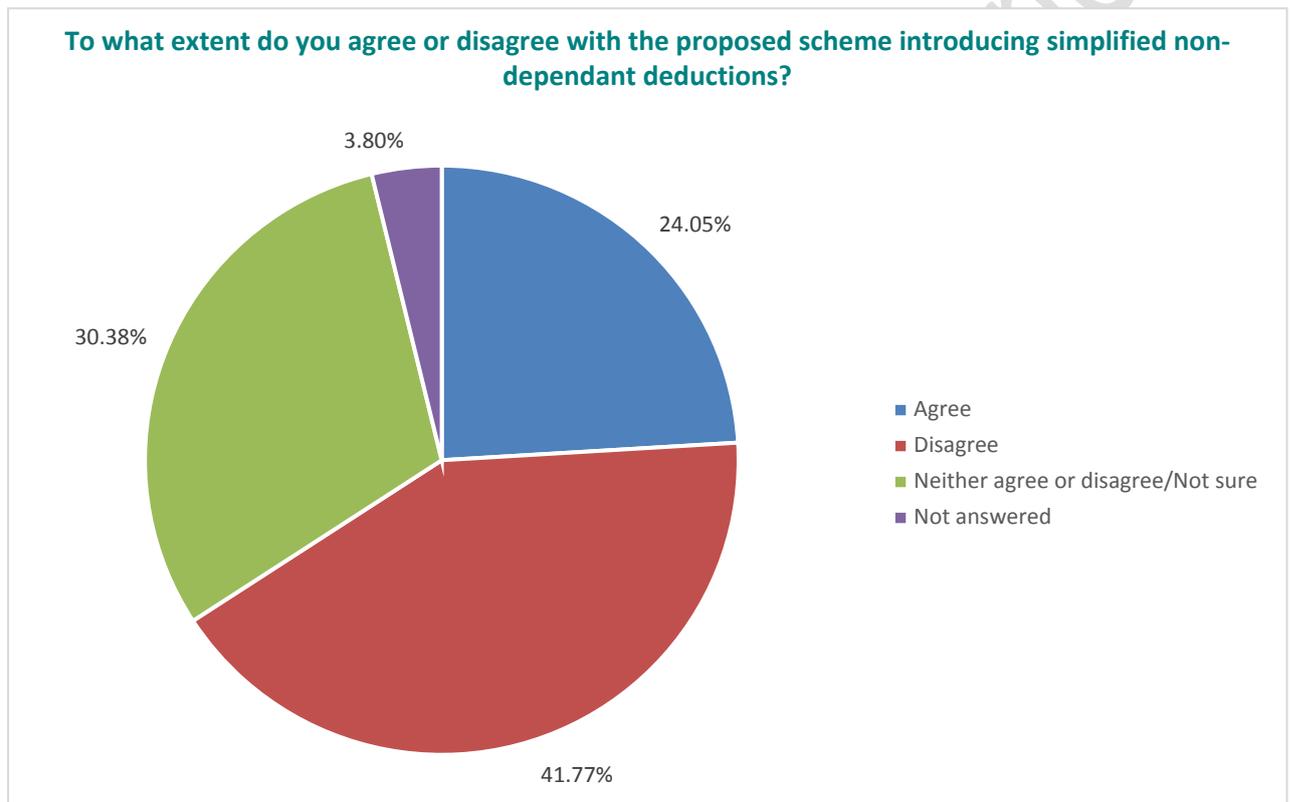
Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

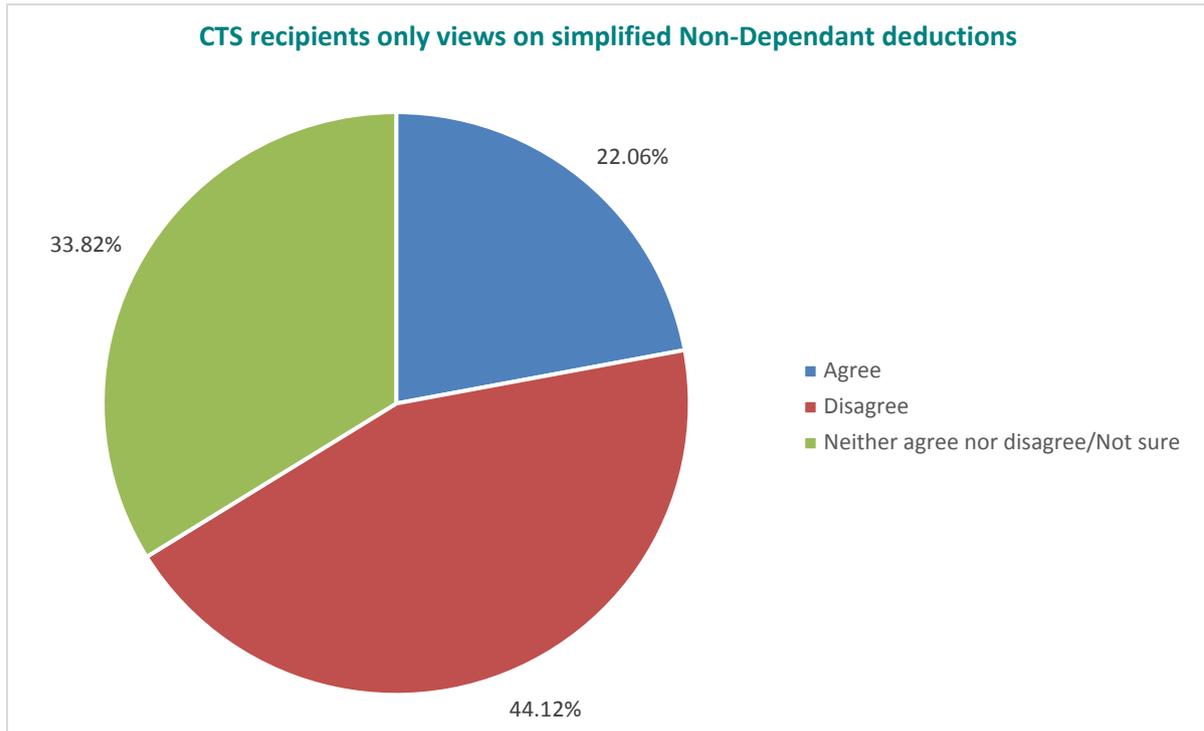
2.1.5 Views on Non-Dependant deductions

24.05% of respondents strongly agreed or tended to agree with the introduction of 2 Non-Dependant deductions compared to 41.77% who disagreed with the proposal. 24.05% neither agreed or disagreed or were unsure.

After strongly disagree (29.96%) the second highest answer to this question was 'Neither tend to agree nor disagree' which may suggest the question was misunderstood.

Figure 2.21: Chart below shows the overall % of agreement and disagreement about simplifying Non-Dependant deductions (below)





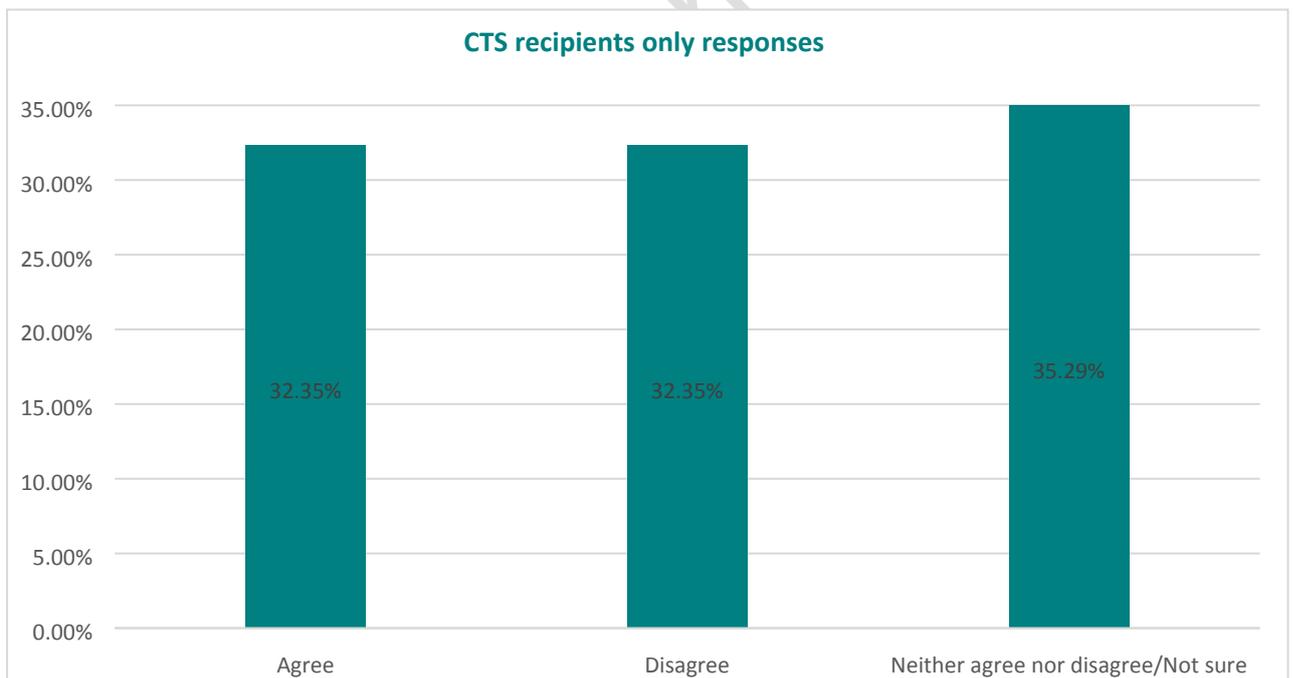
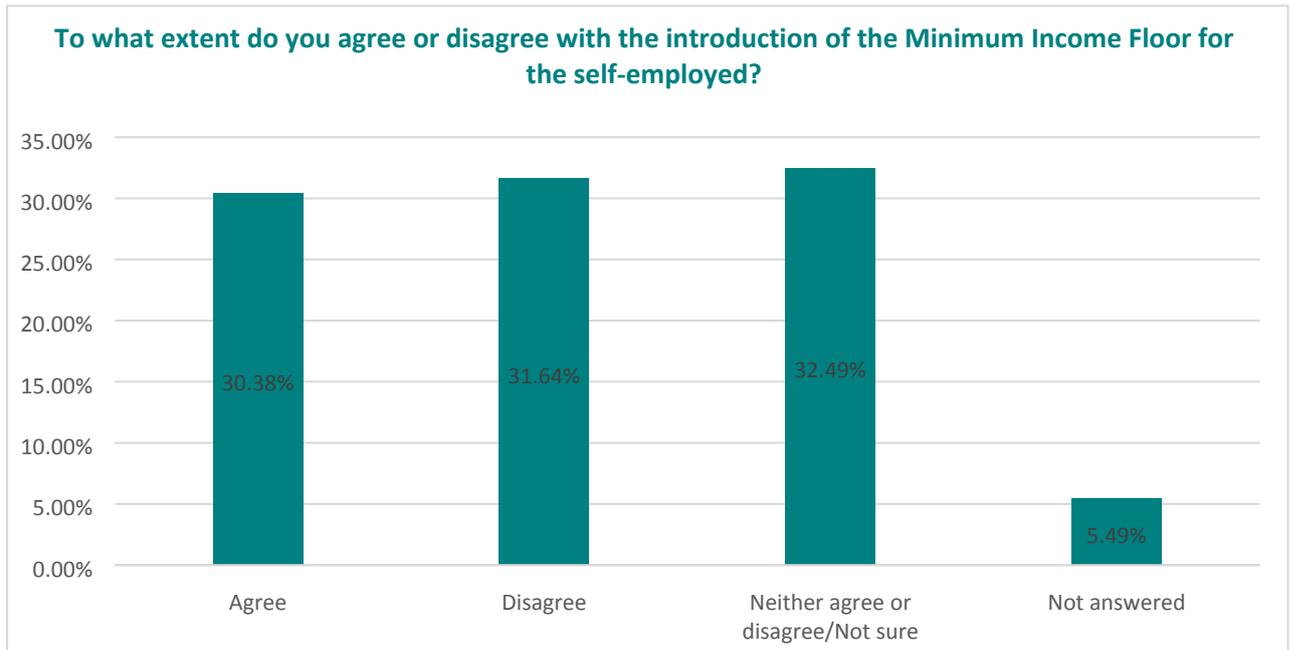
2.1.6 Views on the Minimum Income Floor

Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the introduction of a minimum income floor.

- 30.38% of respondents strongly agreed or tended to agree that the Minimum Income Floor should be introduced.
- 31.64% of respondents strongly disagreed or tended to disagree.
- 17.72% neither agreed nor disagreed along with 14.77% who were unsure resulted in this question received very balanced responses.

Figure 2.22: Graph depicting the closeness in responses to the question on Minimum Income Floor (below)

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019



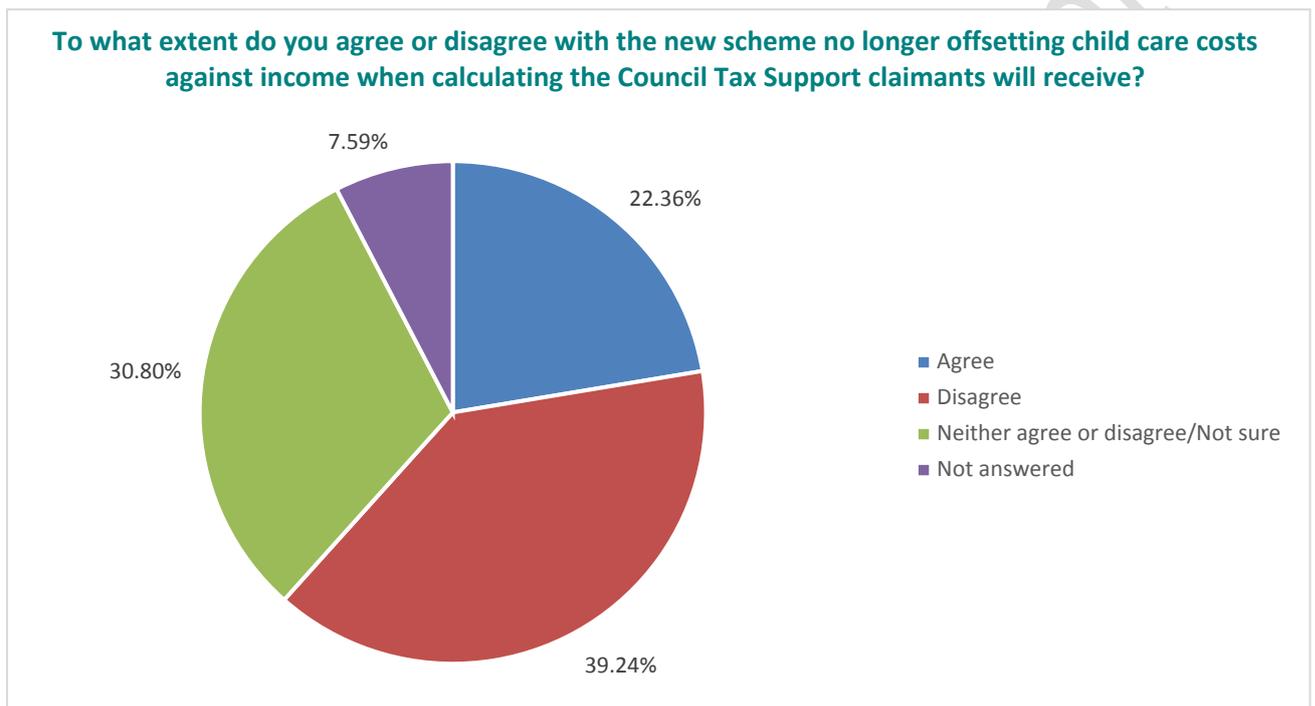
2.1.7 Views on Child Care Costs no longer being disregarded

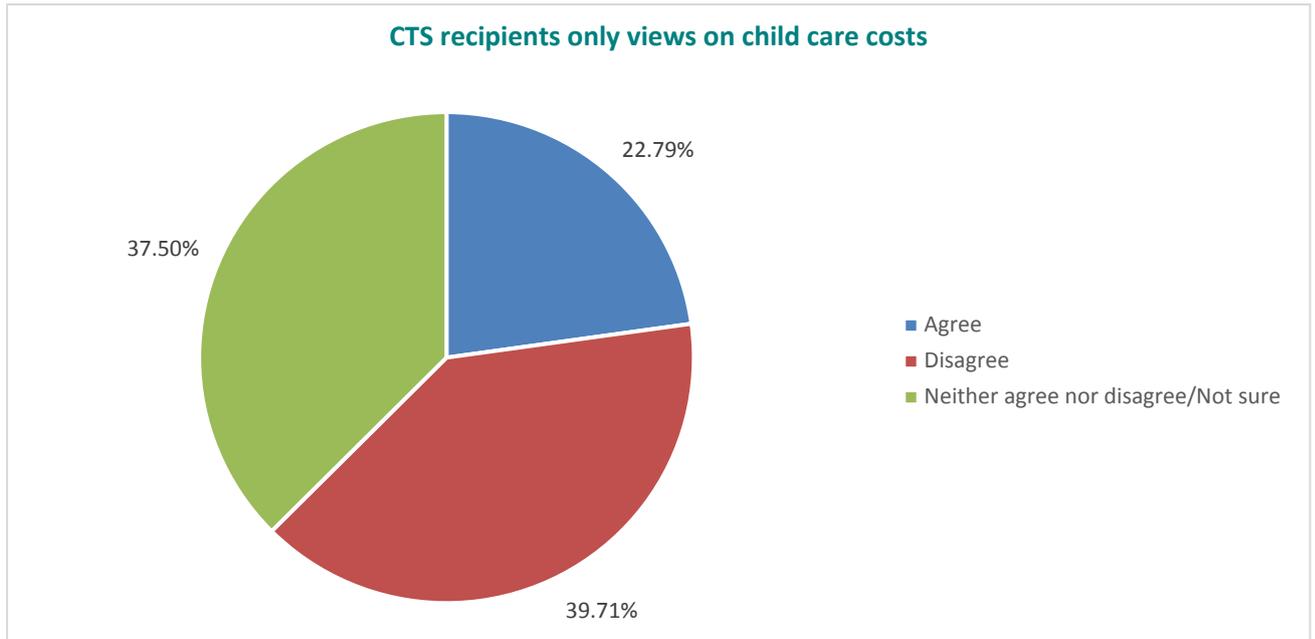
Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the removal of Child Care disregards.

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

- 22.36% of respondents strongly agreed or tended to agree that that Child Care Costs are no longer disregarded.
- 39.24% of respondents strongly disagreed or tended to disagree.
- 14.77% neither agreed nor disagreed along with 16.03% who were unsure resulted in this question received very balanced responses.
- 7.59% of respondents chose not to answer.

Figure 2.23: Chart depicting the closeness in responses to the question on Child Care Disregards (below)





3. Additional questions outside of the 6 key components

3.1 Views on reducing the expenditure of the Council Tax Support Scheme

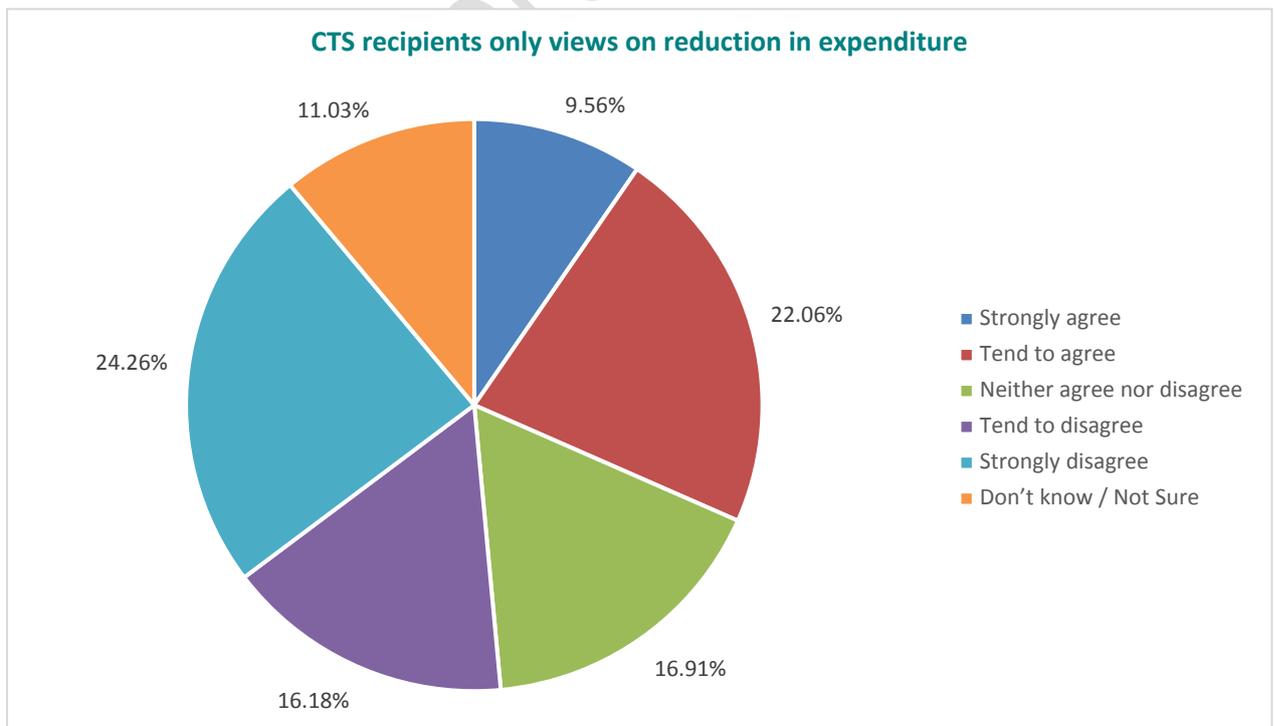
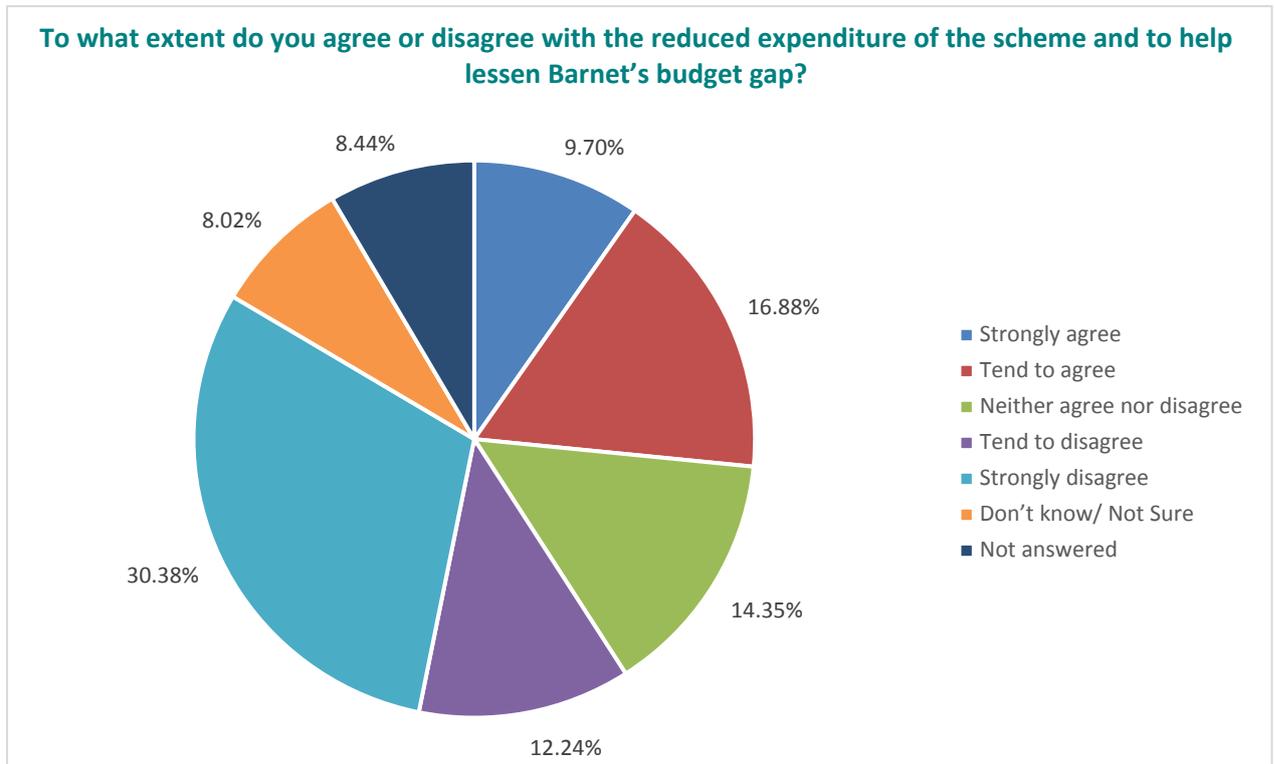
Along with the 6 key components of the scheme residents were also asked their views on other aspects on the proposed scheme.

Respondents were asked if they agree with the council's view on reducing the overall expenditure of the scheme.

- The Figure below shows that there was 26.58% support in reducing the costs of the scheme. 9.70% of respondents strongly agreed with 16.88% tending to agree.
- 42.62% of respondents disagreed with this reducing the overall cost of the scheme. 30.38% of these strongly disagreed with 12.24% tending to disagree.
- 20.26% of respondents neither agreed not disagreed or were unsure.

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

Figure 2.24: Chart depicting the responses to the question on reducing the overall expenditure of the scheme (below)



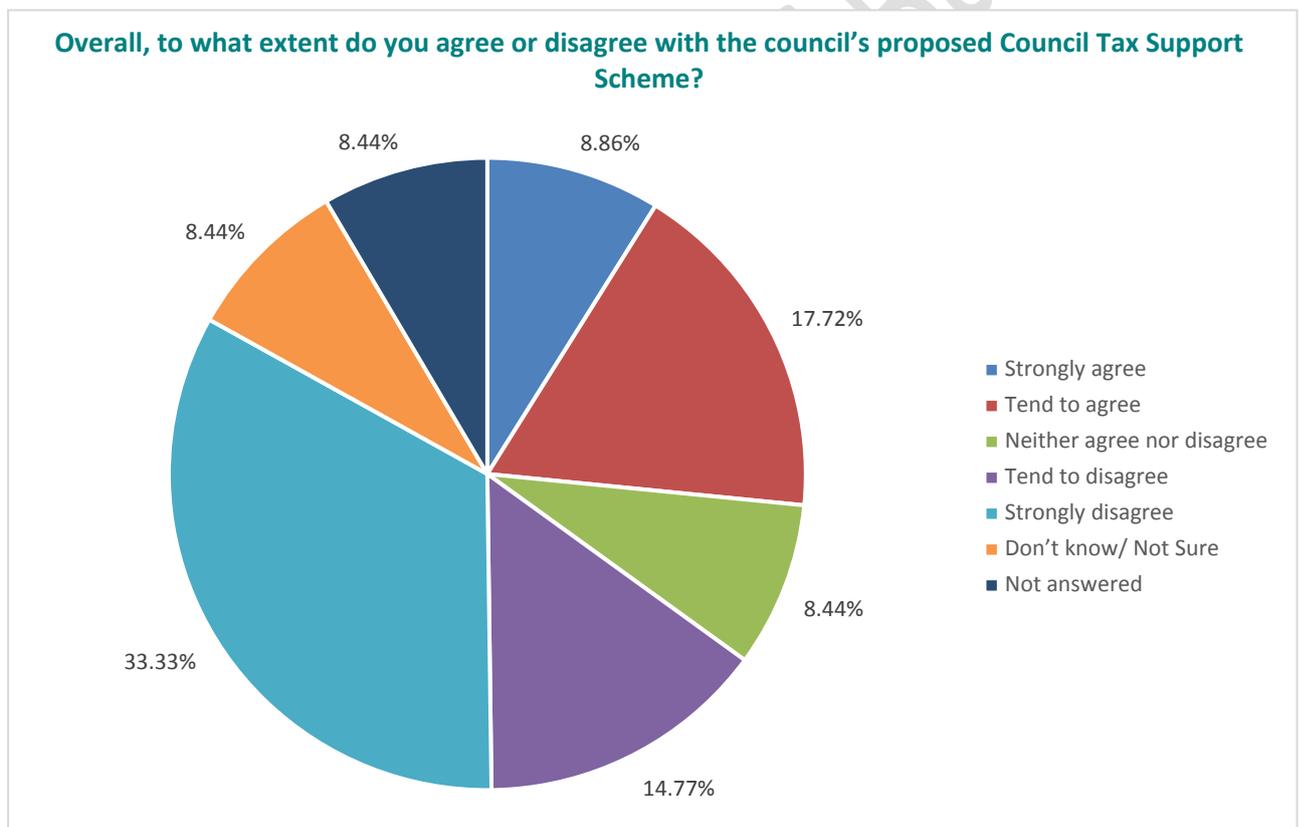
Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

3.2 Views on the overall proposal for the Council Tax Support Scheme

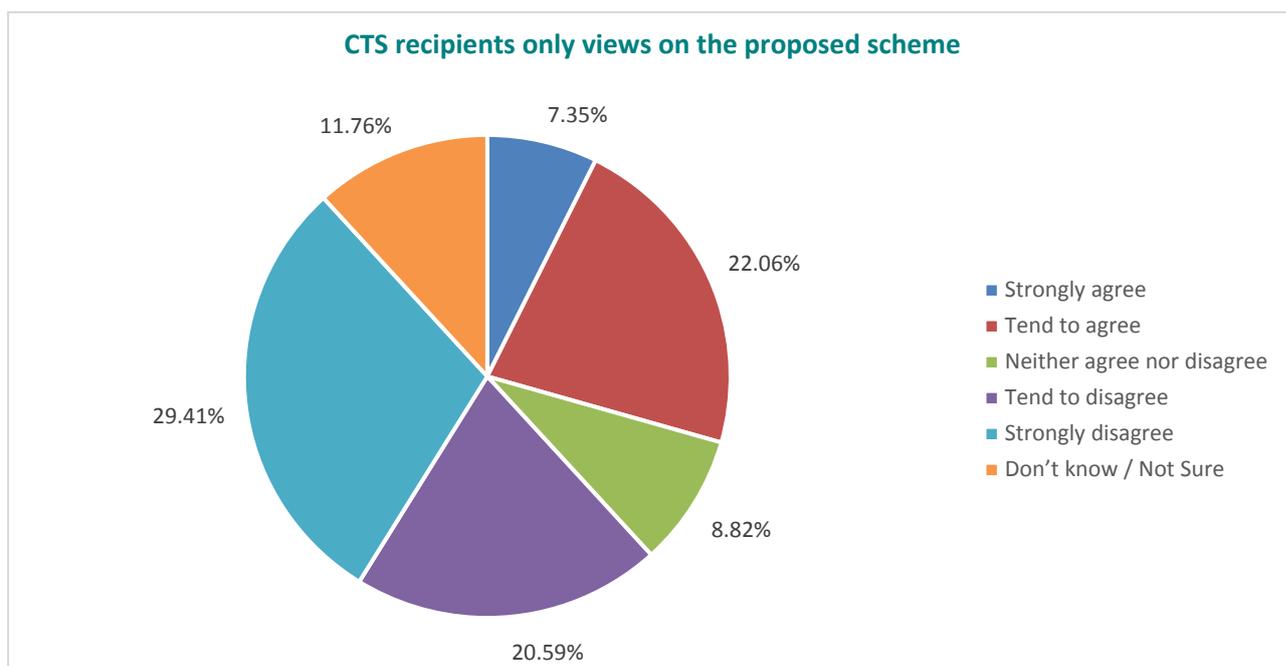
Respondents were asked if they agreed with the overall Proposed Council Tax Support scheme.

- The Figure below shows that there was 26.58% support in reducing the costs of the scheme. 8.86% of respondents strongly agreed with 17.72% tending to agree.
- 48.10% of respondents disagreed with this reducing the overall cost of the scheme. 33.33% of these strongly disagreed with 14.77% tending to disagree.
- 16.88% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed or were unsure. 8.44% of respondents did not answer this question

Figure 2.25: Chart depicting the responses to the question on the overall proposal of the Council Tax Support scheme (below)



Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019



4. Consultation Response – Written Responses

As well as on the online questionnaire, written responses were received from the GLA (appendix B) and Citizens Advice Barnet (Appendix C). 9 paper questionnaires were received and entered online.

5. Additional comments from questionnaire

The questionnaire invited respondents to provide written responses if they disagreed with the proposed changes within the scheme, Appendix A contains full information on these responses.

These have been analysed and grouped into the broad themes below, nonspecific comments or comments made about situations outside the proposed scheme have been left out of the themes below. Several respondents made comments relating to the key components of the proposed scheme, as their agreement or disagreement had already been captured in the earlier questions, these were not duplicated below.

Broad Themes of disagreement not already captured in this report	
Themes	Number of comments
Penalising the poorest/most vulnerable / increasing Poverty	28
Increasing hardship	8
More protection required for disabled households	8

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

Penalising the self employed	5
Will result in increased debt including rent and council tax arrears	4
Penalising families	3
Will increase homelessness	3
Will increase stress and mental health issues	2
Social cleansing exercise	2
Not supportive of those caring for others	2
People with kids claiming benefits is putting pressure on others	1
Discriminating against those with children in childcare	1
Penalising lone parents	1
Will increase crime	1

The above suggests the main area of concern with the proposal is that the poorest and most vulnerable are being unfairly treated which will result in hardship. Other issues have been raised and in the main are covered within the EIA (Appendix E).

The Council will look to support those in severe hardship with DCTH being a possible solution. The Council will also monitor applications for DCTH and continue to review the support available as discussed in paragraph 1.12.

Where respondents disagreed with the proposed changes they were given the opportunity to suggest alternative methods to achieving the required savings. Those comments have also been analysed and grouped into the broad themes shown in the table below. Some of what has been suggested has already been considered within the Councils budget proposal. The Council will consider the other points raised and where appropriate look further into those as potential areas for savings going forward.

Alternative Suggestions to Saving Money	
Themes	Number of comments
Look to wealthier residents for a higher contribution	15
Bring service back in house/end relationship with Capita	14
Reduce staff and or salaries	8
Lobby central government for more funding	4
Reduce support for higher banded properties/increase their tax	4
Don't disregard the value of the claimants home when assessing capital	3
Reduce waste collection	3
Reduce councillor pay/freeze increases	2

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

Don't provide loans to private companies/Saracens	2
Don't waste money on new offices	2
Greater control over highway maintenance expenditure	2
Get businesses to contribute more	1
Increase Council Tax	1
Don't send land off at subsidised prices	1
Collect parking fines	1
Introduce a tax on road pollution	1
Provide less support to those who don't work	1
Get capital expenditure under control	1
Introduce waste collection charges	1
Generate income from green energy initiatives	1
Share a chief exec with neighbouring boroughs	1
Cut expenditure on consultants/agency staff	1
Change in political leadership	1
Limit expenditure on meetings and travel etc	1

6. Conclusion

237 questionnaires were completed. Approximately **0.85%** of the total Council Tax Support caseload or approximately **1.25%** of the working age caseload.

136 of the 237 responses were received from claimants currently in receipt of Council Tax Support. Charts and graphs depicting these responses are within this document alongside the overall charts and graphs depicting total figures.

Figure 2.17 gives an overall view on both total responses and Council Tax Support only responses. It can be seen from these graphs the figures for CTS only recipients are very similar to the figures for total respondents. The table below illustrates this.

	Total Agree	CTS recipient agree	Total Disagree	CTS recipient disagree
Income Banding	48.53%	48.53%	29.95%	26.47%
Income banding levels	37.14%	37.50%	44.72%	42.65%
Reduction in Capital	29.54%	30.88%	54.85%	55.15%
Non-Dependant changes	24.05%	22.06%	41.77%	44.12%

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

Minimum Income Floor	30.38%	32.35%	31.64%	32.35%
Child Care Costs	22.36%	22.79%	39.24%	39.71%
Views on reduction in expenditure	26.58%	31.62%	42.62%	40.44%
Overall views of the proposed scheme	29.03%	29.41%	52.54%	50%

The figures suggest respondents are in favour with the introduction of an income banded Council Tax Support scheme, albeit not with the level of earnings brackets within the income band. 48.53% of total respondents and 48.53% of Council Tax Support recipients agreed. Those that disagreed were 29.95% and 26.47% respectively.

Figures also suggest the most contentious of the 6 key components are the reduction in capital, the removal of the child care disregard and the changes to non-dependant deductions.

The themes highlighted in section 5 suggests the main area of concern with the proposals is that the poorest and most vulnerable are being unfairly treated resulting in hardship. These responses have also been considered with the EIA.

7. Appendix A – Additional Comments from Questionnaire

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme Additional comments

Proposed changes to Barnet's Council Tax Support Scheme - If you disagree, please say why: (Please type in your answer)

Responses

- 1 I would like to pay the right amount of her council tax for 6/8/2013; as I believe because I was under the job seeker allowance scheme and housing benefit as well i was part homeless in 06/08/2013 and you were supporting me at that time and then i got divorced so I lived with only my son with knowinl no English at that time.
- 2 Many thanks for your consideration and we are looking forward to hearing from you soon. So if you can help me with the old tax please do.
There are too many things that have been left out like single parents with two or more children. When pay decreases the decrease will not be taken into account so the person paying will find it difficult paying the amount of council tax. and when you band someone earning £500-800 they could be at the lower end but paying the same as the person at the higher end of the income range which again is not fair as they are taking in lower income than the person at the higher end and they will be struggling to pay the council tax. There are so many things that are wrong with the whole system of council tax.
- 3 It's your concern, figure it out...
- 4 The scheme financially penalises people/families who are on low incomes or people who are on no income due to their caring responsibilities. The scheme treats these people too harshly.
- 5 IT IS ECONOMICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE RESIDENT.

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

Because you will be punishing the poorest and expect the most vulnerable to pay for the financial mess you created!

6 Disabled people expected to use their DLA/PIP Care component for Council Tax?! Young families having to struggle further with child care costs to pay CT?!

The CTS scheme is wrong already if compared with the past CTB, which was linked rightly to HB support and was a much more humane system. This punitive scheme will make this borough to a far less nice place to live in.

7 because the poor shouldn't suffer. barnet council should make money from investments or upping slightly, a few pounds weekly the tax on the wealthy without cutting support for the poor.

8 I am a pensioner with a son on long term unemployment/sick benefit. I currently get my council tax reduced to account for the fact he has no income. I cannot afford to pay any more if my council tax liability increases as a result of these new proposals. I only have a government pension and some savings to manage on. All my bills are increasing at a rate much faster than these are and I am worried this change will significantly increase my council tax bill.

9 In neighbouring boroughs pensioners, disabled people, carers and those on the ESA support group get 100% council tax support. Barnet Council is the second richest council in London and should match neighbouring boroughs.

10 The modest changes under universal credit are going to be considerable reductions in income for many, the help with council tax is being reduced and other expenses will probably rise as well. This will lead to financial hardship destitution fro many people.

11 Robin Hood taking from the poor and subsidise rich. Fat Cat salaries and pensions, outsourcing contracts. 2 Million pounds fraud, privatising pest control. Springwood crescent has had a vermin problem since 2007. Environmental health not issuing an enforcement notice on managing the rubbish that has reached a crisis point.

INCOME BANDING: while I agree with the Council's aim to reduce the number of re-assessments of tax support figures, this should not be done at the expense of people needing this support. You claim that the new scheme will mean people have a clearer idea of what they will be paying but that assumes that their income doesn't fluctuate in a way that keeps moving them between bands. If it does, the changes in support are too drastic for people with a limited income to copy with.

REDUCTION OF THE MAXIMUM CAPITAL LIMIT: for a family, savings of £6000 are hardly a rich 'nest egg' - it is more like a thin shell insulating them against chance events which most of us can cope with easily. I think this proposed reduction is penalising the frugal and making life much more risky and hence, stressful for people who are already dealing with the stresses of poverty.

12 NON-DEPENDENT DEDUCTIONS: the sudden more than doubling of deductions when a non-dependent's income rises from £199 a week to £200 a week seems far too large a difference.

MINIMUM INCOME FLOOR: How can it be fair that a self-employed person earning less than the National Living Wage is arbitrarily assumed to be earning that NLW? This is Orwellian!!

CANCELLING THE CHILD CARE COSTS OFFSET: What about people who are not yet on Universal Credit? And given the hardship that the introduction of Universal Credit seems to be generating, why do you consider parents will suddenly be better off when they're transferred to Universal Credit. You need to take into account what has actually been happening as people are transferred to Universal Credit.

13 As a pensioner i'm supposed to already be exempt to these CTS changes, however I know that the council is already applying this 16K cash limit to me in other areas, requiring me to pay for care, so these changes may indeed affect me in future. It maybe the first of many such future changes.

14 It is not offering any help to low income family

You say it is a matter of 'fairness' that you have to introduce a new scheme. How so? The proposal and implementation of the new Universal Credit is a shambles and I suspect this scheme will also cause hardship to many.

15 I don't quite see that this questionnaire will make any difference to your plans as you have already decided that your new scheme will be implemented.

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This is just a matter of course!!!

We disagreed with the closure of Rosa Freidman Day Centre for the elderly. Questionnaires were completed etc., and it closed. Barnet is now leasing the building to a company. So what was the urgency of getting the residents out? What a joke!!!

16 People can't pay anymore than they already are.

17 non dependent earning 0, deduction of £5.00 from claimants earnings is unfair. With the onset of full
18 universal credit roll out where claimants receiving less benefit- your proposed discounts will not cover
19 their yearly council tax bill.

18 What I can see in your proposed changes is that we will end up paying more council tax. It is hard
19 enough to pay the way it is now.

19 The Council is trying to take more money from the most vulnerable and least able to afford it; pushing
20 families/residents into utter poverty, food bank use and at risk of homelessness and mental health
21 problems. The pressure mounts up until there is an emergency situation. Stop squeezing the poor -
22 there is no slack to take up.

20 SOME CLAIMANTS OF WORKING AGE WHO HAVE HEALTH ISSUES PREVENTING THEM FROM
21 EMPLOYMENT ARE ALREADY HAVING TO WAIT A MINIMUM OF SIX EXTRA YEARS TO
22 RECEIVE THEIR STATE PENSION. A REDUCTION IN CTS WILL CAUSE THEM FURTHER
23 HARDSHIP; MANY WILL HAVE TO USE THEIR SAVINGS TO PAY THEIR COUNCIL TAX, REDUCING
24 THEIR CAPITAL & MAKING THEM MORE LIKELY TO HAVE TO CLAIM BENEFITS IN FUTURE.

21 THE DWP'S WCA IS NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE, AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE NUMBER OF
22 CLAIMANTS WINNING THEIR APPEALS AT TRIBUNALS. THEIR HEALTH OFTEN DOESN'T
23 ALLOW THEM TO COPE WITH THE STRESS OF THE PROTRACTED APPEAL PROCESS.

21 The residents affected are some of the poorest in the Borough who should continue to receive the
22 same level of support to offset paying the full Council Tax.

22 Because this is a way for the council to gradually cut the council tax support scheme. You are giving
23 Barnet residents 'our say', but the council has already decided on this change to the scheme.

23 increased financial burden on least able to meet it

You propose to align a scheme with Universal Credit. It is widely reported that Universal Credit does
not work, the system is flawed, that is common knowledge.

24 Furthermore, Nil income....you get 72% award, tell me, if you have nil income, how can you pay the
25 28%?

Stupid.

I believe it is no more than a deliberate act by the council to cleanse the borough of the poor, just as
the central government are doing.

25 This will put people in financial hardship more then now. Some of the other London boroughs provides
26 100 % council tax reduction to certain benefit receivers while Barnet only providing upto 80 %.

Reducing the reduction further is unacceptable.

26 1. The 'income bands' support proposed from 1-2 jumps from 72% to 52%. This is too steep for low-
27 income earners and a heavy burden for those, who mostly may be entering the job market after a
28 period of hardship.

2. Universal credit does not sufficiently cover childcare costs, nor should childcare cost be considered
only by one social security measure

27 Because why take from the really struggling, why do you take from the Fat Cats who are running the
28 Scheme

28 It seems to penalise the poor.

This scheme is punitive for those on low incomes. While the simplification of income banding is
welcome, the bands identified are not and taper too quickly at the lower end.

29 Reducing the capital limit is at odds with even central government policy, and the current taper is more
equitable.

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The simplification of non-dependent deductions is again welcome, although the exemptions could be widened to include those in the ESA/UC support group.

The minimum income floor is cynical and stifles entrepreneurship. Self-employed people often make a loss initially and should not be assumed to have income they do not have. There is no reasonable justification for assuming someone has money when it is indisputably clear that they do not.

Not offsetting childcare costs is unfair for those claimants on legacy benefits, in particular disabled people on those benefits who would in most cases be worse off under UC. It is a concern if this pushes people into claiming UC (voluntarily transferring from legacy benefits) without taking appropriate advice.

30 There is no consideration for living costs and singles who have dependents. Someone maybe on a reasonable income but still need to rely on their council tax support etc...

31 Poor people need the help

32 Because your proposal will have a negative impact on the most vulnerable people in the borough; that is to say, the poor.

33 Again those on low income that are of working age will have to pay more, yet their income will have not increased. Plus, reducing savings allowance from £16,000 to £6,000 is too big a reduction. Home owners need more than £6,000 to maintain their homes and pay for their care, should they need it.

34 The value of one's home should be taken into account when assessing capital. That means that those with a modest 'savings' level but no home of their own will not be penalised.

35 It is once again the poorest in society that are paying the most ,it is more support they need not less.

36 Because you re targeting people who are already on low incomes and increasing poverty.

37 You are robbing the poor again to pay Capita.

38 People with low budget need more help. Although people with invisible disability need more help too. Universal Credit has been proven to be not fit for purpose. It is putting families and single people into poverty - by reducing council tax benefit as well, you are effectively making people have to choose whether to go without heat or food to pay the deficit. Rents go up, bills go up - Universal Credit takes away. Please reconsider this until Universal Credit has been properly adjusted and actually works.

39 There have been enough cuts in support already. You have not fully consulted on cuts to non-dependent deductions, i.e. I disagree that non-dependent deductions are set to increase. Most non-dependents would prefer to be independent - so you are penalising a generation already struggling to get on the housing ladder, who are already most likely living in a situation they'd prefer not to be living in (in terms of housing). Yet again, these cuts wil impact the poorest in society. Simplification is fine, but this is simplification with cuts in support for low income families.

40 as above

41 firstly, reducing the capital from £ 16,000 to £ 6,000 seems to penalise those who were in a position to put aside some money towards rainy days. Secondly, the Council outsources its services to Capita who invariably manage to mess up the Council Tax owed and/or paid by its households by making innumerable mistakes in the calculations. Those already in receipt of benefits have already seen a reduction in their income with the introduction of Universal Credit. To them every single pound could make a bid difference. The Council should be mindful of the fact that it is those in dire need that might miss paying their Council Tax on time for them then to receive a summon with an additional £ 75 charge on top. the system must be more flexible and understanding of individual"s circumstances.

42 I am struggling at the moment to pay my council tax on a low income, the increases you will demand are simply unaffordable in the real world

43 When my husband is disable and I am his care 24/7 and our benefit even can't cover our expenses how plus that we can council tax? That's mean we pay back some of the money that government think we need to live which is not. It is really not fair.

44 Any change in status quo contains an element of risk. The assessments seem highly speculative, at the expense of the low-earners of this borough.

45 1. Income bands should be seperated by less than £2000 in each band. The proposed £4000 is too big gap.

46 2. Capitals/ savings of £6000 is too much plummet. From £16000, it is fairer to reduce to 10,000-12,000.

47 Most people on benefits are already struggling to pay council tax and are having to forgo essential bills

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sometimes eating in order to pay their council tax - THIS IS WRONG

48 This is not a simplified method of collection. This is simply a protracted way of asking for more money. The introduction of a minimum income floor parameter will create an enormous headache for claimant and council alike. The net result will be a greater percentage of people entering into arrears or refusal to pay, creating a larger burden on the council in attempts to enforce recovery of this money.

49 People who are on social service benefit receive minimum amount by law to survive. The amount for council tax is not included in it. Therefore, it is not fair for them to be forced to pay for council tax.
Hi

50 I am single and working part time and I tried my best not to get help from government. It is very difficult for me to have basic life and always short of money so I didn't get married didn't make kids because I know that I can't afford it but there are people doesn't care getting married making kids and keep claiming benefits and council give them lots of service and benefits . Council put more pressure on people like me to provide more service to people doesn't care about them community .

51 I am over 60 and have severe back problems such as sciatica and i need more support from the council and i feel that the new scheme is not going to help me.

52 Not sure

53 because those on lowest incomes will lose out and they should be supported

54 You are trying to make the poor poorer

As we hear on the news, universal credit isn't working and sending people into deeper poverty, food banks and homelessness .it is wrong to change council tax support tied up to the benefit which clearly isn't working. Due to save 3 millions on administration, you will send low income families into danger. If people with just over 6K saving starts to pay full council, within a year .their saving will drop to under 6K and goes back to CTS, which create more administration confusion and incur costs. Charles Dickens wrote about poverty in his era And all the poverty cruelty and spitefulness under Toryism will also be remembered for hundreds of years. there have already been two cuts under this Tory council to Council tax support for the poorest in society. Perhaps look more to the hugely wealthy residents in Barnet to shoulder a little more of the burden.

56 This smells strongly of social cleansing. It seems the Tories whether in government or councils hit the poorest not the wealthiest with broader shoulders able contribute a little more.

57 First of all its really difficult to understand the calculation council does for council tax reduction at the moment we are paying really high council tax n top of that we are told council is helping how I cant understand its stress to just think about day to day life with 2 growing kids dont want to talk more thanks stay blessed All

You are making the very poorest people in the borough meet the shortfall made by mismanagement of the council's finances. This has unintended consequences - it may force more people to use foodbanks or they will run up debts with landlords/council and end up on the street which is even more expensive. It may also stimulate petty crime when people are placed in circumstances of extreme hardship. All those consequences have a cost which has not been considered in this calculation.

59 No-one on benefits should lose out.

60 UC in general caused reduction in benefits devastating the life of many. I would expect the Council to offset this lose by increasing the support for those who affected, not decreasing it. If the council proposition will have negative impact on young families, (savings, child care etc) as well as the people on low income.

61 If the council needs to reduce its spending, it should not be taking money from the most vulnerable people in our society. Those that rely on council tax support are on the lowest incomes. The council should not be taking money away from those in need.

62 Chancellor said Austerity is over but you are not taking into account childcare.

63 Regarding the savings, £6000, the council tax will apply 100% is not right as living costs are much higher than in the past. It is also £6000 is not a lot of money nowadays. We all need this sort of money in saving. People who have social service benefit can have savings up to £16000. This is not a large amount of money. Why they have to pay full amount of council tax if they have more than £6000?

A few years ago, these people did not need to pay for council tax at all. They could receive 100% council tax reduction or supports!

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64 People who have a low income should not just get a 40% discount. We have other bills to worry about necessities like electric and gas which is always increasing in price. Paying council tax more than we should will only cause stress on people.

65 Lower income households should not have to pay a higher % of council tax. Must already have high rents with LH Allowance not keeping in line with private rents. Householders on low income are having to contribute more towards rent, which leaves lower disposable income and living expenses.

66 I feel low credit families will lose out unfairly

67 this is not about simplifying the process. its about saving money. why do it on the back of those who can least afford. bear in mind these are the people already suffering from spiraling housing costs.

68 The universal credit has not been implemented in London and it may not be implemented in the next two years, what's the rush!?

69 You're cruel to the most needy residents but easy on supporting a millionaire's rugby pitch.

70 You failed to mention state aided carers, who I believe should receive 100% rebate, as they do in your neighbouring borough of Enfield

It looks like punishing the low income people once again. Why do not you try increase the tax collected from the big companies or chase it up with the companies not increasing the hourly rates for self employed people for the last 4-5 years. When we make such request they simply tell us off and find another. This will only make the low income people loose some much needed income. It is very disappointing!

71

72 New proposals penalise low earners and face putting low income earners like me into debt as new proposed percentages are very low and leave lots to be paid by me

73 Not sure what it means for me

74 Generally designed to disadvantage the poorest residents

Universal credit is not fit for purpose. Changing council tax support to be more in line with it is not smart. You say that you will have to generate more letters unless you change the council tax support system. This is not true. You will be wasting more money than you will save by implementing the changes. Instead, make your current administration system better

75

76 This scheme penalises people in dire financial need. As such it is despicable

77 maximum benefit seems to be being reduced to 72% from 80%. This should remain at 80%

78 Self employed pupils on low income are bad affected

79 Rubbish

I think it's discriminating against those who have children in childcare and are working, expecting those who earn less than the minimum wage in self employment to pay more than they can afford to especially if they have children in childcare, is basically asking those to fall into arrears and become homeless without the current support in place, the current system supports people it shouldn't be changed because it's out of date if it's actually supporting those to stay in their homes with their children too.

80

81 Because it doesn't help people on a low income whose weekly earnings vary and who are on universal credit

Not everyone is on universal credit so the assessment will not take into that but also the money scheme £16000 is not a lot for a parent with children and a child with disabilities who requires a lot of care the money goes towards bills and adaptations for them that no one else provides having to pay full council tax for having over £6000 will put a certain range of social care tenants in extreme hardship and will result in people either not paying the council tax or not paying another bill instead

82

83 I can not afford to pay my bills

84 The changes will have a unfair impact on the lowest paid in Barnet, including low pay self-employed. It feels like once again people on low incomes, self employed people etc are being targeted in order to make savings and cut costs. People in these categories are already struggling and stretched and this is going to add further to the stress - which in the long term will create more problems ie health issues, etc etc. Perhaps an adjustment is required with the Universal Credit scheme coming up (another idea that is being grossly mismanaged at the expense of the sick and disabled and low income families)

85 however it should be made very fair so people are not penalised by this unthought out and poorly executed scheme. I also don't feel the threshold for savings should be reduced from £16000/- to £6000/-. If this is absolutely necessary, it should perhaps be reduced by less, say to £10000/- or so. This is not fair. People at the lower income end, with more genuine,essential expenses etc are being penalised because the government keeps moving the goal posts further and further away - simply

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because they can!

86 Reduces support to those who need it most

87 If the council need to make savings it is most immoral to go straight for the least well-off and hurt them. e.g. you built a brand new building in Colindale for yourself from taxpayer's money, besides there is nothing wrong with the old one, where did you get money to build this building? Now you want to save more money from poor people by reducing their council tax support...

88 people have enough financial worries if they are claiming benefits or on a low income or both and universal credit roll-out is causing many problems

89 Thi

90 people already straggle

91 As a disabled person living with my family we are struggling enough, putting more prusre will effect us more mentally and physically will cost more foe nhs so I don't think i5 will help each side.

92 Whether a person owns a property (even under mortgage) should be taken into account.

93 Unemployed people should not have to contribute to the costs of council tax. As UC is already living in poverty. We need to return to before 2013 when unemployed were exempt from paying.

If you disagree, do you have any alternative suggestions on how the council could save this money? (Please type in your answer)

Responses

1 Abolish council tax for lower income earners and tax the higher earners which at the end of the day will balance out everything and they can afford to pay it. Someone having to claim council tax support is clearly struggling anyway so why make them struggle more?

2 ?

3 The council should raise more money from the richer corporate/business entities which it deals with and which operate within the borough. Or the council should increase the council tax rates for high-earning people who live in high-banded private properties.

4 YES, THERE SHOULD BE SAVINGS IN OTHER AREAS

5 Get rid of Capita and outsourcing and bring services back in-house, so you can stop wasting our tax money on Capita's share holders and have more money for the benefit of this borough's residents!

6 as suggested above.

7 The government needs to start investing in councils, not just continue to cut everything. Austerity is supposed to be ending now!

8 I do not want Barnet council to be privatised and run by capita. I want Barnet council to be run by local people.

If central government is making savings with harsh benefit cuts the council could apply to them for extra money that is needed. Instead of punishing those who have little or nothing already.

9 1- Minimum weekly awards would be far to complicated for everybody.

2-Restricting support - a maximum council tax band should definitely be an option.

3- I disagree with the third option as this again punishes those on the lowest incomes.

10 Show leadership, Reduce fat cat salaries and pensions. Bring all services back in house including pest control. Maintain Bin collections as before. Make change means " increasing " bin collections to daily as in hot countries.£2 million fraud to be recouped from capita. Pensioners preserved from cuts. Control rents - Rent to buy for those unable to afford a mortgage. This will stop fraudulent housing benefit claims - save this country millions of pounds.

11 I think council tax should be increased, but that increas MUST be accompanied by a Council Tax

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Support Scheme that really does help the less affluent people in Barnet. Many, many people living here (myself included) could easily afford to pay more and would be willing to, if that helps our fellow citizens and ensures that the Council provides really good support for the more vulnerable people in our borough.

12 A definite cast iron promise that pensioners currently on 100% CTS relief will keep this current benefit.

13 Regardless of everyone's say, your new plan will go ahead.

14 Get your money back from the Icelandic banks.

less outsourcing to the private sector. Generate more council employment. this is more cost effective.

15 Stop selling council land to property developers at a subsidised rate.

Collect revenue from parking fines. The pot holes on Barnet roads are atrocious.

16 To consider in which other areas which are less important the council might save the money (though I gather you've done that already!).

17 Reduce Councillors' pay/honoraria.

18 CHARGE THE VERY WEALTHY BARNET RESIDENTS AN EXTRA PREMIUM ON THEIR COUNCIL TAX.

19 Increase Council Tax for those Barnet residents not in need of support and who pay the full Council Tax.

20 tax the rich

21 Yes, STOP PAYING CAPITA and other known agencies with a string of failures behind them. They do not work.

22 Council should look at other avenues such as getting proper tax from businesses and stop spending public money on unnecessary road works etc.

1. Support should start from 85-80% and gradually decrease until band 7 where people will be earning between £1,400-£2,000 per month net income (presumably). Helping people to have the inclination to save when they have lower income margins, will likely result in people having more disposable income margins when they are earning more.

23 2. In the long-term offsetting childcare costs against income will benefit families, reducing financial pressures on new families and/or middle-low income families, thus benefiting the borough's economy through investment in children.

3. This is a disingenuous question: really state-sponsored investment in their local boroughs can produce savings and stimulate productivity, via state-sponsored enterprises that create added-value and profits which can be used to feedback into the budget. Yet the local council among others have privatised many services through contracts with private companies, while underpaying their own staff. Conservative notions of "living within one's means" are ridiculous in today's increasingly cosmopolitan societies, local investment and positive visionary ethical foresight will inevitably result in savings in the long-term. One hopes that you will take heed. Although, you probably already know this.

24 Keep it as it was you are ruining Great Britain I grew up all my Life.

25 Charge high earners more council tax, extend the pollution tax to Barnet to cover traffic to and from the M25, more efficient benefits claim method (less paper).

26 Barnet would save money by not aggressively pursuing residents without means for CT arrears which it knows they can never pay. This scheme will increase costs in terms of liability orders and enforcement as it will put more vulnerable people into a position by which they cannot pay. This will also have a knock on effect on local mental health services. Have these costs been factored in to the financial modelling?

27 Stop rewarding people who don't work, why not have your support be calculated with both income and expenditure, or provide a reward for those who work are above the allowance but still are in a deficit. Support those who work and still cant afford to live! reduce the benefits of those not working - ensure it comes out of their weekly income. Soon they will get a job

28 Reduce the pay, or fire the imbeciles that devised this harebrained scheme. The poor have suffered enough!

29 think again.

30 Include, when assessing capital, the value (within the last few months) of one's home.

31 Stop paying private companies to provide services that the council can provide ,Barnet should not be

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giving loans to a private company. I pay my council tax for services for all ,so charge more.

32 Kick Out Capita

33 Make people's life easy instead of harder.

34 Pay top brass at the council less. Streamline council departments - its impossible to find someone to answer a phone anyway so you may as well get rid of some people. Do not have roadworks on a Saturday/Sunday when council workers get paid more.

35 Central government should increase their funding of local governments and tax the top 5% (if need be) further to fund this. There seems to be money for the DUP, for the EU, for inquiry after inquiry, for the McCann investigation, so I'm sure they could find these funds somewhere.

36 as above

I have difficulty in understanding how the Council would be running at a deficit when the Borough has been for the last decade a party to one of the largest housing development I have seen in my lifetime . Surely , every planning application warrants a payment to the council, new owners/ tenants become liable to Council Tax. Has there been an improvement to the services? I would say a deterioration is more likely. Our high streets are populated with betting shops , fast food outlets, nail bars who only operate on a cash only basis. Many shops are a front for something else as they are always empty. The Council might want to think about getting communities involved in providing services for free in return for a reduction in their Council Tax. Or introduce a good citizen award. As a priority it should take back in-house the management of Council Tax and other services currently run by Capita.

38 Increase council tax for higher earners/high value properties - a very easy solution!

39 The government has to support all the councils or increase the council tax of rich people.

40 Tax HMO owners!

41 1. Income bands should be seperated by less than £2000 in each band. The proposed £4000 is too big gap.

42 2. Capitals/ savings of £6000 is too much plummet. From £16000, it is fairer to reduce to 10,000-12,000. Cut other services provided by the council and ensure that those on benefits and low incomes have the MAXIMUM assistance and help in the reduction of their council bills. Increase the council tax obligation for those in higher value properties.

43 Those who clearly have the means to pay, will not be pushed into poverty by a nominal increase.

The current proposal will punish those who are least able to meet the council's demands.

44 Paying less salary for directors and management level of the staff to save for Barnet Council budget. Charging higher rate of Council Tax to people who are rich.

45 Look after single people more please.

46 More control for who is applicable for the councils support might reduce the expenditures

47 Not sure

48 raise council tax! Barnet always says it is a low-tax borough but if tax is fair, then the wealthier help support the less well-off

49 Cut your wages

50 go paperless and save postage, Have street wardens to issue fines for anti social behaviour such as spitting and dropping litter and cigarette end. Each fine amounts to the proposed cut of CTS of 12 people.

51 Like Westminster Council a Voluntary Mansion Tax Band could be brought in which has raised a considerable amount of extra funds for the council. Also not waste funds at the end of the tax year with the sole purpose of getting extra funds from the government.

52 Review senior council salaries which have become excessive. A 10% cut to all those officers earning over £75,000 per annum would save £500k per annum plus c£115,000 per annum in pension costs. Sack Capita and restructure the council. Having a silo structure it does not allow synergies between services to be exploited, it is inflexible and the contract fee is indexed to inflation. It would also mean a reduction in the number of commissioning staff. I estimate this could save c.£3-4 million a year. Get capital expenditure under control - the interest payments directly affect the revenue budget. In particular the interest cost associated with the BX Thameslink station are huge which we are exposed to. Consider introducing a small charge on green bin collections such as £25/annum. Even if only 30% of households paid the fee that would raise £1m per annum. Move to fortnightly general waste collections - that would

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- save £900k a year. In summary start listening to residents.
- 53 Get rid of the commissioning team which costs more to run than council tax support does. Set a salary cap of £100,000. Become boringly efficient. Move to fortnightly bin collections. Don't lend £23m to Saracens
1. Get rid of Capita, which is a major resources sucker.
2. Take back services in-house, it was proven to be cheaper.
- 54 3. Reduce the salaries of the highly paid officers.
4. start initiatives to generate income from e.g. local green energy.
5. put a pressure on the 3 conservatives MPs to press the government to end its devastating cuts policies.
- 55 Identify other areas where you can save money that don't involve disadvantaging the poorest members of our community
- 56 Fewer admin staff? Fewer managers?
- 57 I would like to suggest Barnet Council to take more council tax who are rich or wealthy millionaire!
- 58 If austerity is ending as Theresa May has stated, then why is the council not seeking more funding from the government. Should be lobbying along with other councils for more funding.
- 59 Target the rich not the poor
- 60 maybe those who are benefiting from a broken housing market should be paying more.
- 61 The present scheme is working perfectly well and it's simple. You are trying to make it very complicated in order to same some money,
- No need to do that.
- 62 Raise council tax on the highest band to compensate.
- 63 Give full time state aided carers who live on £63 carers allowance and £44.50 income support per week, 100% rebate..
- 64 Why do not you try to cut some workforce since they are no longer needed because of the benefit changes and maybe consider decreasing the bin collection dates like many other councils are doing.
- 65 Leave scheme as it us
- 66 Kick out Capita. They're wasting our money
- 67 Yes. Invite me to do an audit of how much manpower and resources are wasted due to your department not speaking to other departments in the same building as you. Integrate a computer system for Barnet everything.. Homes, support etc
- Talk to each other. Employ people who can read and comprehend. Stop wasting money building a shiny new office block in Colindale. Reduce the expenses and salaries of the higher ups.
- 68 Kick Out Capita and stop Gainshare payments, using cash saved to ensure most needy in Barnet are treated fairly and are not pauperised
- 69 I dont have specific information to make a sensible suggestion
- 70 Increase council tax for every one
- 71 Tax the rich not cut from the poor
- 72 As there's already raises in council tax, it shouldn't be those with nothing already be hit it's absolutely appalling that there's people going to food banks and being made homeless that they're being hit because of cuts to the council, this isnt where you make cuts if you want to protect children. You could be asking to raise funds for the council through community schemes that benefit joining people together socially.
- 73 should charge more from those who earn more, but should not effect those on lower income
- 74 The council should end all outsourcing to Capita and other private companies and bring the services back in-house.
- 75 Several changes to payment of Council Tax were made in the last few years which adversely affected people on low incomes, sick and disabled. For example in certain cases where someone was exempt from paying Council tax altogether, they are now having to pay towards it - albeit a certain percentage

and this is while the benefits etc have been frozen - so more expenditure but no increased income! There are other departments within the Council itself I'm sure that could be looked at where cuts could be made. Also perhaps the higher earners could be assessed and asked to pay more towards the Council Tax/Social Care as they can afford it. It is unfair that a high earner pays the same amount of Council Tax than a low earner. I'm sure you have heard these arguments before and I think it is time to give them some serious consideration. I wish I could make some further, practical suggestions but I am not exactly sure of the departments within the Council - where I am sure cuts could be made easily and without affecting anyone adversely. This would be something that the Council would need to look into themselves. Thank you.

- 76 Use a means tested system and banded after a certain threshold.
- 77 Revenue generating schemes can be started and savings can be made on non essential expenses e.g. sports.
All these Highway maintenance builders wasting council's money, digging the roads, leaving the temporary traffic lights on for couple of days, besides nothing is happening on that road...
- subsidised council canteens
 - some councils do 'glitzy award ceremonies'
 - one chief executive can serve three authorities
 - Freeze councillor allowances and end councillor pensions
- 78
- Cut spending on consultants and agency staff
 - End expensive 'leadership' training courses
 - Cut spending on head hunters and expensive adverts
 - Stop providing free food and drink for meetings
 - review giving money to 'fake' charities
 - Reduce first class travel
- 79 no - please leave it as it is
- 80 Spend more effectively
- 81 Changing banding limits as appropriate, include the values of people's owned properties (even if under mortgage) in the total of people's assets.
- 82 Well first of take back services from capita and put them in house. And Sack the council leader.

8. Appendix B – GLA written response

Dear Darren

LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2019-20 CONSULTATION RESPONSE BY GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

Thank you for your email of 28 October confirming the publication on the Council's website of the London Borough of Barnet's consultation on changes to the council tax support scheme for 2019-20. The proposals consulted on

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

are summarised in this letter, which also sets out the GLA's response to the consultation.

Introduction

As in previous years, the GLA recognises that the determination of council tax support schemes under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 are a local matter for each London borough. Individual schemes need to be developed which have regard to specific local circumstances, both in respect of the potential impact of any scheme on working age claimants (particularly vulnerable groups) and, more generally, the financial impact on the council and local council tax payers – and therefore the final policies adopted may, for legitimate reasons, differ across the capital's 33 billing authorities.

This fact notwithstanding the GLA also shares in the risks and potential shortfalls arising from the impact of council tax benefit localisation in proportion to its share of the council tax in each London billing authority. It is therefore important that we are engaged in the scheme development process and have an understanding of both the factors which have been taken into account by boroughs in framing their proposals, as well as the data and underlying assumptions used to determine any forecast shortfalls which will inform the final scheme design.

Framing Proposals

As part of the introduction of council tax support in 2013-14, the Government set out its expectation that, in developing their scheme proposals, billing authorities should ensure that:

- Pensioners see no change in their current level of awards whether they are existing or new claimants;
- They consider extending support or protection to other vulnerable groups; and
- Local schemes should support work incentives and, in particular, avoid disincentives to move into work.

The GLA concurs with those general broad principles and encourages all billing authorities in London to have regard to them in framing their schemes.

Proposed Changes to the 2019-20 Scheme

The Council is proposing to move from its existing council tax support scheme, in place since 2015, to a new 'banded' scheme from 2019-20 onwards. The Council identifies reforms made by the Government to the welfare system, as the driver for change. In particular, it states, the introduction of Universal Credit means the existing scheme is no longer compatible and the need for frequent reassessments and changes to CTS entitlement would make administration of the existing scheme too costly.

The new scheme will take into account income from net earnings in determining eligibility for CTS. Net earnings are defined as earnings after income tax, national insurance and 50% of pension contributions. As the scheme is based

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

on earned income, it will not include income from tax credits. The table below shows, for all of the options, the monthly income bands and maximum levels of council tax reduction for each band.

Monthly Earnings	Maximum level of council tax support discount
No earnings	72%
Up to £500	52%
£500-800	44%
£800-1100	36%
£1100-1400	28%
£1400-1700	20%
£1700-2000	12%

In addition, the new scheme will include the following changes:

- The maximum capital limit will be reduced from £16,000 to £6,000; claimants with more than £6,000 will not be eligible for an award under the CTS scheme.
- Non-dependant deductions will be simplified in line with Universal Credit, with the introduction of two flat rates. For households with a non-dependant with income of up to £200 per week, the claimant will receive £5 less CTS per week. For households with income of £200 per week or more, the claimant will receive £11 less CTS per week.
- Claimants will not receive a non-dependant deduction if they or their partner are in receipt of the care component of Disability Living Allowance at the middle or highest rate, receiving the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment or receive the Carer Premium.
- A minimum income floor will be applied, in line with Universal Credit (UC), to ensure self-employed people are treated on the same basis, whether receiving UC or legacy benefits. Self-employed claimants declaring a lower income than the national living wage will have their CTS calculated on a notional income equal to that of the national living wage.
- Childcare costs will not be taken into account when assessing income for determining claims for CTS by applicants.

The consultation states that Barnet considered alternatives to the proposed scheme, but none were identified as meeting the Council's objectives. As such, the consultation does not propose adopting any of these options and therefore the GLA's comments below are focussed on the Council's preferred option.

The GLA supports the Council's proposal to move to a banded scheme; it is important that schemes take account of the ongoing implementation of Universal Credit. The proposed change should help to reduce the burden on the

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

Council to recalculate entitlements multiple times a year. It will also improve certainty over the council tax bill for UC claimants, enabling greater certainty for households to budget and plan their finances.

Notwithstanding the above comments, the GLA is concerned about the Government's proposals for the 'managed migration' of working-age benefit claimants to UC over the next year. The GLA's recent response to the Government's Social Security Advisory Committee consultation on this process called for DWP to pause the rollout of full service UC and delay managed migration, until underlying technical issues have been addressed and claimants, welfare advisers, and other experts have been consulted on reducing the complexity of the claim process.

The GLA recognises that local authorities face difficult choices on CTS schemes, as overall funding from central government reduces and funding for CTS is no longer identifiable within the settlement. However, the Council's proposals would mean some significant changes to the existing scheme. On average, support for working age claimants will reduce by 25% under the Council's proposals, as set out in the modelling in Appendix A of the Urgency Committee's paper from 18 October. The proposals particularly affect those in receipt of legacy benefits; couples with or without children in receipt of legacy benefits face a significant reduction in support of over 30%.

The proposal to increase the minimum contribution to 28% would mean the minimum contribution level would be amongst the schemes that require the highest level of contribution from working age claimants. Three other London boroughs currently require a minimum contribution level of over 25%. There is also a substantial difference between the 28% minimum contribution level for claimants who are not working (Band 1) and those in the next band who are earning up to £500 a month, with the contribution level rising to 48%. This could lead to a potential 'cliff-edge' where claimants move into work, which may have negative impacts on incentives to work.

The increase in the minimum contribution level would lead to a significant percentage increase in the amount of council tax some current claimants are required to pay from 2019-20. The examples provided in the consultation document demonstrate that some claimants will face a 40% increase in their weekly payments in 2019-20, compared to 2018-19. Evidence suggests that the collection rate can decline as the minimum payment level increases. Research from the New Policy Institute has demonstrated that arrears tend to increase significantly for schemes with a minimum contribution threshold above 20%.

The GLA recognises that reducing the capital limit to £6,000 would bring the Council's scheme into line with others in London. However, it is not clear from the consultation document how many people this change would be likely to affect. There is a possibility that for a limited cohort of claimants this change could lead to a significant rise in their council tax liability. It would be helpful to understand the number of claimants who would be affected by this proposal and the average increase in their liability.

The GLA recognises that the changes proposed by Barnet more closely align the support offered through its CTS scheme to claimants on Universal Credit and legacy benefits. However, we would encourage the Council to consider how the changes may impact on vulnerable groups in particular, who could be adversely affected by significant changes between 2018-19 and 2019-20. The Council could consider capping the maximum changes at a lower level for households with families, at least in 2019-20, to enable claimants to adapt to the new scheme. The GLA would also be covering part of the cost of a cap in proportion to the GLA precept element of council tax payable by these CTS claimants.

The GLA considers that, before finalising their 2019-20 schemes, all billing authorities should re-examine the challenges which they will face in collecting relatively small sums of money from claimants on low incomes, who may not be able to pay by direct debit or other automatic payment mechanisms, based on their experiences in the first six years of the localised system. In some cases, the administrative costs of enforcing such payments may outweigh the cost saved by reducing support.

The GLA welcomes the proposal to continue to make a discretionary council tax relief scheme available. We would encourage the Council to take a proactive approach to informing those council tax support claimants who are facing difficulties paying council tax bills about this policy. The council could also consider providing more funding for the scheme in 2019-20, to support claimants as they adapt to the new contribution rates and other changes to the scheme.

Finally, the GLA would encourage the Council to consider whether additional income can be generated through the new ability billing authorities will have from 2019-20 to increase the empty homes premium; this is set out in further detail below. It is the GLA's view that the proposed changes should be considered in the whole. If one proposed change results in greater savings for the Council that could be used to reduce the need to apply other proposals, then we would encourage the Council to consider doing this as it would help to reduce the financial burden on individuals and families in Barnet who see their CTS entitlement reduced.

Financial Implications of the Proposed Scheme

It would be helpful for the GLA's planning purposes if Barnet could provide us with a forecast total cost for the proposed scheme in 2019-20, based on the forecast 2018-19 caseload, taking into account any developments since the public consultation was launched – ideally apportioning all elements between the GLA and the council having regard to 2018-19 council tax shares. This would also allow the GLA to calculate its share of the cost of the scheme proposed by Barnet.

Technical Reforms to Council Tax

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

The GLA considers that in formulating its council tax support scheme each billing authority should both consider and address the impact of the additional revenue it is expecting to raise from the technical reforms to council tax introduced in the Local Government Finance Act 2012, which provide greater flexibility in relation to discounts, exemptions and premiums for second and empty homes. The additional revenues from the technical reforms could be used to reduce any shortfalls and thus the sums which need to be recovered from working age claimants via any changes to council tax support.

The GLA understands that in 2018-19 Barnet has the following policies in place:

- For properties requiring or undergoing major repairs or structural alterations (former class A): a 0% discount
- For properties unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (former class C): a 0% discount
- Second homes: a 0% discount
- Long-term empty properties: a 50% premium on properties that have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of two years, meaning the full charge of 150% is payable in such cases.

The Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act, which received Royal Assent in November 2018, enables councils from April 2019 to charge 100% premiums on properties which have been empty for more than two years. The legislation also gives councils the ability to charge higher premiums in subsequent years for properties which have been empty for longer periods of time. The GLA would encourage councils to consider the impact of implementing a higher premium and the potential additional revenues this would generate, when considering the detail of council tax support schemes.

We would encourage the Council to inform us as soon as possible if any changes are proposed to its discount and premium policies, in order to assist us in assessing the potential impact on the Mayor's funding and tax base for 2019-20 and future years.

Council Tax Protocol

In recent years the issue of council tax collection practices has become more high profile. The GLA, of course, recognises the importance of ensuring council tax arrears are collected wherever possible. However, in some instances poor collection practices can worsen debt problems for vulnerable residents. The GLA welcomes the fact that Barnet has signed up to the council tax protocol, developed by Citizens Advice, in partnership with the Local Government Association. The protocol outlines a number of practical steps for early intervention to support people struggling with payments. In London, eight boroughs have now and the GLA is encouraging all boroughs to consider adopting the protocol.

Providing Information on Schemes

Whilst we recognise that the detailed rules on council tax support schemes are inevitably complex, the GLA would encourage all boroughs to make every effort to set out information on their schemes as clearly as possible. Information that may help potential claimants could include an online calculator, to identify whether potential claimants are likely to be entitled to support, as well as 'Frequently Asked Questions' and a summary document outlining concise details of the scheme. In addition, for existing claimants, we would encourage boroughs to consider how the process for reporting changes in circumstances can be made as straightforward as possible.

Setting the Council Tax Base for 2019-20 and Assumptions in Relation to Collection Rates

The Council will be required to set a council tax base for 2019-20 taking into account the potential impact of the discounts the Council may introduce in respect of council tax support and any potential changes the Council may implement regarding the changes to the treatment of second and empty homes.

The Council will need to make a judgement as to the forecast collection rates from those claimants and council taxpayers affected by any changes to council tax support, taking into account the experience in the first six years of the council tax support arrangements.

The GLA would encourage the council to provide it with an indicative council tax base forecast as soon as options are presented to members for approval, in order that it can assess the potential implications for the Mayor's budget for police, fire and other services for 2019-20. This should ideally be accompanied by supporting calculations disclosing any assumptions around collection rates and discounts granted having regard to the final council tax support scheme design.

Collection Fund and Precept Payments

By 23 January 2019 the council is required to notify the GLA of its forecast collection fund surplus or deficit for 2018-19, which will reflect the cumulative impact of the first six years of the localisation of council tax support. The GLA would encourage the council to provide it with this information as soon as it is available.

I would like to thank you again for consulting the GLA on your proposed council tax support options for 2019-20.

Yours sincerely

Martin Mitchell
Finance Manager

9. Appendix C – Citizens Advice Barnet written response

Dear Darren

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

Please find Citizens Advice Barnet's response to the Council Tax Support schemes proposed changes:

Council Tax Support proposed changes - Citizens Advice Barnet response

We understand the reasons behind Barnet Council's decision to change the current Council Tax Support scheme however we are extremely concerned about the impact this will have on vulnerable adults, many of whom are our clients. From April 2018 to September 2018 4% of our clients experiencing benefit problems specifically had issues with Council Tax Support and 19% of clients with debt issues had Council Tax debts.

Our thoughts on the proposed changes are as follows:

Income Band Scheme

The banding calculations are unreasonable and need to be revised. A client cannot be expected to see a 20% reduction in the amount of CTS they receive, just by earning any amount of money. This would mean if a client earns even £10 they would then move from the 72% maximum CTS band to the 52% CTS band, which seems wholly illogical. Should the <£500 banding be removed and in line with the nil income category up until the point they earn £500? Then should the other bandings all be moved/revised? The scheme surely does not wish to penalise those who work earning less than £500 per month, which in itself is a very low income. This change creates a deterrent to work, even if earning a small amount which is against the whole premise of UC and encouraging claimants to work.

Reduce the maximum capital limit

This reduction seems unfair in light of all other means tested benefits having a capital limit of £16k, with a tariff income applied from £6k. Should the same scheme that is applied to other means tested benefits not be applied under the CTS scheme?

Simplify non-dependant deductions

This appears logical and easier than the current outdated scheme that was under the old rules.

Apply a minimum income floor

Although this is applied in UC we believe it is wholly unfair to make an assumption that someone is earning a minimum amount when they may not be doing so. We are campaigning about this element of UC as it is fundamentally unfair. Applying a minimum income floor again creates another deterrent to work and stifles enterprise.

No longer offset childcare costs

This option makes little sense for those with childcare costs (which we know can be quite high). If childcare costs are not offset those with childcare costs

Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

covered by UC or WTC would likely see no CTS award which seems wholly unfair. Those with childcare costs not offset by other benefits will be heavily penalised and this, again, disincentivises work.

We would like to know if the budget for the Council Tax Discretionary Relief Scheme will be increased in light of these changes? There is no indication that this schemes budget will be increase.

Thanks,
Charlene

Charlene Marks
Head of Services and Quality



London Borough of Barnet

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London SE1 2AA
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Web: www.london.gov.uk

Darren Smith,
Project Manager, Commissioning Group
London Borough of Barnet
North London Business Park
Oakleigh Road South
London N11 1NP

Our ref: CTS
Your ref:
Date: 28 November 2018

Dear Darren

**LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2019-20
CONSULTATION RESPONSE BY GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY**

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Technical Reforms to Council Tax

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Setting the Council Tax Base for 2019-20 and Assumptions in Relation to Collection Rates

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The Council will need to make a judgement as to the forecast collection rates from those claimants and council taxpayers affected by any changes to council tax support, taking into account the experience in the first six years of the council tax support arrangements.

The GLA would encourage the council to provide it with an indicative council tax base forecast as soon as options are presented to members for approval, in order that it can assess the potential implications for the Mayor's budget for police, fire and other services for 2019-20. This should ideally be accompanied by supporting calculations disclosing any assumptions around collection rates and discounts granted having regard to the final council tax support scheme design.

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By 23 January 2019 the council is required to notify the GLA of its forecast collection fund surplus or deficit for 2018-19, which will reflect the cumulative impact of the first six years of the localisation of council tax support. The GLA would encourage the council to provide it with this information as soon as it is available.

I would like to thank you again for consulting the GLA on your proposed council tax support options for 2019-20.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Mitchell', written in a cursive style.

Martin Mitchell
Finance Manager

Dear Darren

Please find Citizens Advice Barnet's response to the Council Tax Support schemes proposed changes:

Council Tax Support proposed changes - Citizens Advice Barnet response

We understand the reasons behind Barnet Council's decision to change the current Council Tax Support scheme however we are extremely concerned about the impact this will have on vulnerable adults, many of whom are our clients. From April 2018 to September 2018 4% of our clients experiencing benefit problems specifically had issues with Council Tax Support and 19% of clients with debt issues had Council Tax debts.

Our thoughts on the proposed changes are as follows:

Income Band Scheme

The banding calculations are unreasonable and need to be revised. A client cannot be expected to see a 20% reduction in the amount of CTS they receive, just by earning any amount of money. This would mean if a client earns even £10 they would then move from the 72% maximum CTS band to the 52% CTS band, which seems wholly illogical. Should the <£500 banding be removed and in line with the nil income category up until the point they earn £500? Then should the other bandings all be moved/revised? The scheme surely does not wish to penalise those who work earning less than £500 per month, which in itself is a very low income. This change creates a deterrent to work, even if earning a small amount which is against the whole premise of UC and encouraging claimants to work.

Reduce the maximum capital limit

This reduction seems unfair in light of all other means tested benefits having a capital limit of £16k, with a tariff income applied from £6k. Should the same scheme that is applied to other means tested benefits not be applied under the CTS scheme?

Simplify non-dependant deductions

This appears logical and easier than the current outdated scheme that was under the old rules.

Apply a minimum income floor

Although this is applied in UC we believe it is wholly unfair to make an assumption that someone is earning a minimum amount when they may not be doing so. We are campaigning about this element of UC as it is fundamentally unfair. Applying a minimum income floor again creates another deterrent to work and stifles enterprise.

No longer offset childcare costs

This option makes little sense for those with childcare costs (which we know can be quite high). If childcare costs are not offset those with childcare costs covered by UC or WTC would likely see no CTS award which seems wholly unfair. Those with childcare costs not offset by other benefits will be heavily penalised and this, again, disincentivises work.

We would like to know if the budget for the Council Tax Discretionary Relief Scheme will be increased in light of these changes? There is no indication that this schemes budget will be increase.

Thanks,
Charlene

Charlene Marks
Head of Services and Quality



Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) Resident/Service User

Please refer to the guidance and initial Equality Impact Analysis before completing this form.

1. Details of function, policy, procedure or service:	
Title of what is being assessed: Revised Council Tax Support scheme	
Is it a new or revised function, policy, procedure or service? Revised Policy	
Department and Section: Revenues & Benefits, Finance, Commissioning Group	
Date assessment completed: 14th November 2018	
2. Names and roles of people completing this assessment:	
Lead officer	Darren Smith – Project Manager, Finance, Commissioning Allan Clark - Revenues and Benefits Manager, Finance, Commissioning
Stakeholder groups	Claimants, 3 rd Sector organisations, Barnet residents, Members, Capita, Commissioning Group, Revenues & Benefits department
Representative from internal stakeholders	Cath Shaw - Deputy Chief Executive Paul Clarke - Head of Finance
Representative from external stakeholders	Various
Delivery Unit Equalities Network rep	Amy Steel
Performance Management rep	Not Applicable
HR rep (for employment related issues)	Not Applicable
3. Full description of function, policy, procedure or service:	
Please describe the aims and objectives of the function, policy, procedure or service	
<p>The Council Tax Support scheme helps residents on low incomes to pay their Council Tax. Under the current scheme, a working-age household liable for Council Tax could get up to 80% of the charge paid through the scheme, dependent upon their circumstances. (Working-age is anyone under Pension Credit age).</p> <p>A new simplified version of the scheme is being proposed to bring the scheme in line with Universal Credit and help reduce the overall cost of the scheme.</p>	

With the introduction of Universal Credit and the financial challenges facing the council, the current Council Tax Support scheme is no longer fit for purpose.

The scheme has become too costly to administer in its current form with administration costs set to rise year-on-year following the introduction of Universal Credit. Keeping the current scheme as it is will mean any modest changes to a claimant's income under Universal Credit will result in frequent changes to the level of Council Tax Support they receive and the number of Council Tax bills generated. The new scheme will reduce uncertainty for claimants and additional costs to the council in administration.

The current Council Tax Support scheme in Barnet is not compatible with the Government's Universal Credit Scheme. As more people claim Universal Credit, it is important that the scheme is adapted to ensure both Universal Credit and legacy benefit claimants are treated equally.

The proposed changes will see the overall cost of the scheme fall from £23.99 million to £20.8 million thus helping reduce Barnet's budget gap.

As this scheme is designed to save £3.2m per annum against current scheme costs, the majority of households will lose support under this scheme. A small proportion of low earners may maintain current support levels or gain slightly.

Households in receipt of legacy benefits will lose more support compared to retention of the current scheme than households that have migrated to Universal Credit. Higher earning households and the self-employed will lose more support than lower-earning households.

Losing all support

Under this scheme, 380 households would no longer be eligible for support.

Households losing more than £5.00 per week

6,700 households would lose more than £5.00 per week, this is 35% of those currently receiving support. 61% of those losing more than £5.00 per week are households in receipt of legacy benefits.

The groups most likely to lose more than £5.00 per week are working couples (with or without children). 73% of self-employed lose more than £5.00 per week due to the introduction of the minimum income floor. 56% of couples with children lose more than £5.00 per week due to higher levels of earned income in these households.

Households losing more than £5.00 per week, by economic status				
Economic status	Universal Credit		Legacy benefits	
	Number losing over £5/week	% of total cohort losing over £5/week	Number losing over £5/week	% of total cohort losing over £5/week
Employed	990	42.1%	1,611	43.3%
Self-employed	783	72.8%	1,298	73.3%
Out-of-work benefits	836	19.7%	1,182	19.7%
Total	2609	34.1%	4,091	35.6%

Model 5: Households losing more than £5/week by economic status

Households losing more than £5.00 per week, by household composition				
Household type	Universal Credit		Legacy benefits	
	Number losing over £5/week	% of total cohort losing over £5/week	Number losing over £5/week	% of total cohort losing over £5/week
Single	777	23.7%	1,056	23.5%
Lone Parent	667	30.5%	1,011	29.5%
Couple no children	226	54.2%	306	54.8%
Couple with children	939	52.9%	1,718	57.2%
Total	2609	34.1%	4,091	35.6%

Model 5: Households losing more than £5/week by household composition

Although 6,700 households will lose more than £5.00 week, 56% of these (3748 households) lose less than £10.00 per week. However, 17% (1,160 households) lose more than £15.00 per week.

Number of households losing support		
Loss £/week	Universal Credit	Legacy
£5-£10	1471	2277
£10-15	683	1109
£15-20	286	430
>£20	169	275
Total losing more than £5/week	2609	4091

Model 5: breakdown of households losing support

Households gaining £5.00 per week

692 households gain more than £5.00 per week. These are primarily low-earning employed households.

86% of these (594 households) gain less than £10.00 week and only 4.05% of these (28 households) gain more than £15.00 per week.

Number of households gaining support		
	Universal Credit	Legacy
£5-10	238	356
£10-15	33	43
£15-20	8	14
>£20	3	3
Total gaining more than £5/week	279	413

Model 5: breakdown of households gaining support

Barnet Council will consider additional support for the most vulnerable through its Discretionary funds in accordance with Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

<p>How are the equality strands affected? Please detail the effects on each equality strand, and any mitigating action you have taken so far. Please include any relevant data. If you do not have relevant data please explain why.</p>			
Equality Strand	Affected?	Please explain how affected	What action has been taken already to mitigate this? What further action is planned to mitigate this?
1. Age	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Working age claimants will be affected by the change in policy. The Government have protected Pension Credit Age claimants from any change, so will still receive the full support as they do under the current scheme. Working Age claimants could see an increase in the amount of Council Tax they are required to pay.</p>	<p>Through all the Government's welfare reforms specifically Universal Credit, it is intended that citizens will be better off in work than in receipt of benefits. Accordingly, anyone affected by the additional contribution they have to make will be encouraged to seek employment to maximise their income wherever possible. Support to do this is available through the Job Centre Plus, Job Coaches who will signpost to relevant support networks, which could include Revenues and Benefits staff.</p> <p>In order to mitigate against this, resources will continue to be available to support the most vulnerable and this may be met through the council's Discretionary Funds in accordance with Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.</p>
2. Disability	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>This group will not be disproportionately affected compared to any other working age group, however, they will be impacted by the reduction in support.</p> <p>As with the current scheme the proposed scheme will continue to disregard Non-Dependant deductions</p>	<p>In order to mitigate against this, resources will continue to be available to support the most vulnerable and this may be met through the council's Discretionary Funds in accordance with Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.</p>

		where a claimant or partner are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance Care Component (middle or higher rate) or the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP).	
3. Gender reassignment	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The scheme will not treat people of different genders any differently.	Not Applicable.
4. Pregnancy and maternity	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/>	This group will not be disproportionately affected compared to any other working age group, however, they will be impacted by the reduction in support. It may be that whilst on maternity pay thus having a reduced income someone receives additional support as they do under the current scheme.	In order to mitigate against this, resources will continue to be available to support the most vulnerable and this may be met through the council's Discretionary Funds in accordance with Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
5. Race / Ethnicity	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	We do not hold any specific data for this category.	Not Applicable.
6. Religion or belief	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	We do not hold any specific data for this category.	Not Applicable.
7. Gender / sex	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Changes in the proposed scheme are not gender specific. The same income thresholds and percentage contributions apply to all claimants.	Not Applicable.
8. Sexual orientation	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> / No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Changes in the proposed scheme do not consider sexual orientation. The same income thresholds and percentage contributions apply to all claimants.	Not Applicable.
9. Marital Status	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/>	Couples (not necessarily married) on average will be impacted more than single people. The main reasons for this are typically higher net earnings and/or larger properties. Typically, the	In order to mitigate against this, resources will continue to be available to support the most vulnerable and this may be met through the council's Discretionary Funds in accordance with

		larger the property the higher Council Tax band which means any percentage to pay increases.	Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
10. Other key groups?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/>	Carers and people with mental health will not be disproportionately affected compared to any other working age group, however, they will be impacted by the reduction in support.	In order to mitigate against this, resources will continue to be available to support the most vulnerable and this may be met through the council's Discretionary Funds in accordance with Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
Carers	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/>		
People with mental health issues	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/>		
Some families and lone parents	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/>	Modelling shows families are impacted more than other groups. This is covered in section 3 and section 13.	
People with a low income	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/>		
Unemployed people	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/>	People on low income and unemployed people will be affected by the proposals	
Young people not in employment, education or training	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / No <input type="checkbox"/>	If the NEET group of people are liable for Council Tax they will be treated the same as all other working age groups.	Under 18's are exempt from Council Tax so will be unaffected. Some care leavers will be exempt from paying Council Tax as per the council's discretionary care leaver relief policy.

4. What will be the impact of delivery of any proposals on satisfaction ratings amongst different groups of residents?

If the changes to Council Tax Support scheme are implemented the impact of the proposals amongst different groups of residents will vary. There will be significant impact to those in receipt of Council Tax Support, approximately 19,000 households. Council Tax payers will be impacted by any decision on a support scheme whether receiving support or not as the scheme costs directly impact on the Council Tax base used for setting the Tax. Pensioners in receipt of Council Tax Support are protected against the changes to the support scheme. This may increase pressures on local charities and organisations who may be asked for help and advice going forwards.

5. How does the proposal enhance Barnet's reputation as a good place to work and live?

If changes proposed are enacted, then to those who are not affected, the changes will be seen as ensuring the council is delivering value for money whilst still effectively meeting people's needs in the borough. To those that are affected, they may feel aggrieved that the most vulnerable are being targeted.

6. How will members of Barnet's diverse communities feel more confident about the council and the manner in which it conducts its business?

The general population in Barnet is very diverse in terms of faith, ethnicity, culture, language, gender and sexuality. The proposals primarily affect claimants of CTS. The Council does not have data on claimants' faith, ethnicity, gender or sexuality.

The financial element won't be seen positively by those more severely impacted and the changes on the whole will be negative on all equality strands of the working age. Certain groups are protected such as pensioners.

The service is commissioned within the context of the council's Strategic Equalities Objective, which is that citizens will be treated equally, with understanding and respect, and will have equal access to quality services which provide value to the tax payer.

7. Please outline what measures and methods have been designed to monitor the application of the policy or service, the achievement of intended outcomes and the identification of any unintended or adverse impact? *Include information about the groups of people affected by this proposal. Include how frequently the monitoring will be conducted and who will be made aware of the analysis and outcomes? This should include key decision makers. Include these measures in the Equality Improvement Plan (section 16)*

- Regular contract monitoring based on a performance framework – including quarterly meetings with the provider – in line with the council's contract management framework
- Continual monitoring of Council Tax Collection
- Working with contract supplier to ensure Council Tax Support is looked into for those struggling to meet their Council Tax payments
- Ensuring Discretionary Funds in accordance with Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 is being monitored and used accordingly
- Annual service reviews
- Engagement with stakeholders will help identify trends or impact from the scheme on any affected protected groups.

8. How will the new proposals enable the council to promote good relations between different communities? *Include whether proposals bring different groups of people together, does the proposal have the potential to lead to resentment between different groups of people and how might you be able to compensate for perceptions of differential treatment or whether implications are explained.*

The new proposals will allow the needs of Barnet residents to be met effectively via realigning resources and reducing the budget gap. This should help ensure the corporate priorities of the Council are maintained. With the exception of pensioners all other groups will be treated equally.

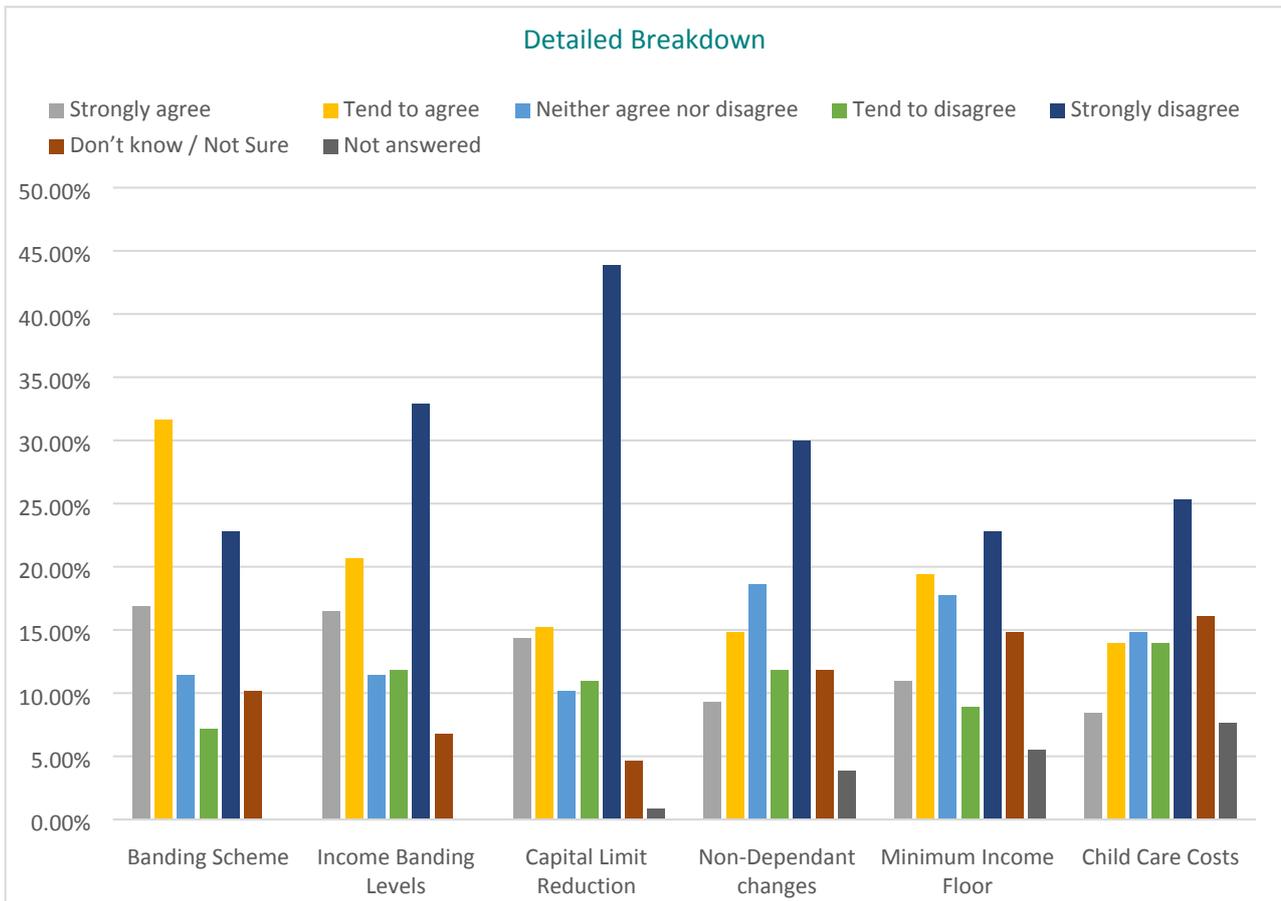
The provider will work with different communities in Barnet to support coordinating good information and advice and increasing awareness of support available under the newly proposed scheme.

The new scheme is a significantly simplified scheme which has been reported by many residents taking part in the drop-in sessions. Many have said it's much easier to understand.

9. How have employees and residents with different needs been consulted on the anticipated impact of this proposal? How have any comments influenced the final proposal? Please include information about any prior consultation on the proposal been undertaken, and any dissatisfaction with it from a particular section of the community. Please refer to Table 2

The consultation is now closed with 237 responses received via online or paper questionnaire and 2 written responses from GLA and Citizens Advice Barnet.

The following graph shows the overall responses across the 6 key components of the proposal.



This graph above is all 237 responses. The graph below is the responses of Council Tax Support claimants only, these were 136 of the 237 respondents.



The responses from CTS claimants are very similar to that of the total overall responses. The table below shows illustrates this.

	Total Agree	CTS recipient agree	Total Disagree	CTS recipient disagree
Income Banding	48.53%	48.53%	29.95%	26.47%
Income banding levels	37.14%	37.50%	44.72%	42.65%
Reduction in Capital	29.54%	30.88%	54.85%	55.15%
Non-Dependant changes	24.05%	22.06%	41.77%	44.12%
Minimum Income Floor	30.38%	32.35%	31.64%	32.35%
Child Care Costs	22.36%	22.79%	39.24%	39.71%
Views on reduction in expenditure	26.58%	31.62%	42.62%	40.44%
Overall views of the proposed scheme	29.03%	29.41%	52.54%	50%

In addition to the responses the questions on the key components, respondents were asked for any additional comments. These have been categorised below

Broad Themes of disagreement not already captured in this report	
	Number of comments
Penalising the poorest/most vulnerable / increasing Poverty	28
Increasing hardship	8
More protection required for disabled households	8
Penalising the self employed	5
Will result in increased debt including rent and council tax arrears	4
Penalising families	3
Will increase homelessness	3
Will increase stress and mental health issues	2
Social cleansing exercise	2
Not supportive of those caring for others	2
People with kids claiming benefits is putting pressure on others	1
Discriminating against those with children in childcare	1
Penalising lone parents	1
Will increase crime	1

All feedback has been analysed and considered with further modelling done around capital, non-dependent deductions and minimum income floor changes. Owing to the savings that the Council are required to make it simply cannot afford to propose a more generous scheme

by removing these elements of the proposed scheme.

Therefore although the consultation prompted the Council to rethink its scheme, the proposal remains as consulted on.

Overall Assessment

10. Overall impact			
Positive Impact <input type="checkbox"/>	Negative Impact or Impact Not Known ¹ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No Impact <input type="checkbox"/>	
11. Scale of Impact			
Positive impact: Minimal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Significant <input type="checkbox"/>	Negative Impact or Impact Not Known Minimal <input type="checkbox"/> Significant <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A small number (359) of households will benefit from the proposed changes however the rest of the approximate 19,000 households will be negatively impacted.	
12. Outcome			
No change to decision <input type="checkbox"/>	Adjustment needed to decision <input type="checkbox"/>	Continue with decision <i>(despite adverse impact / missed opportunity)</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	If significant negative impact - Stop / rethink <input type="checkbox"/>

¹ 'Impact Not Known' – tick this box if there is no up-to-date data or information to show the effects or outcomes of the function, policy, procedure or service on all of the equality strands.

13. Please give full explanation for how the overall assessment and outcome was decided.

In line with the Council's Corporate Plan which outlines a key principle of fairness, the review aimed to ensure that we are using our resources as fairly as possible; targeting services at those who need them most.

The proposed changes will see the overall cost of the scheme fall from £23.99 million to £20.8 million thus helping reduce Barnet's budget gap.

Policy in Practice were commissioned to carry out all data analysis and forecasting on behalf of Barnet Council to devise a scheme that achieved Barnet's aim of reducing the overall cost of the scheme by £3.2 million, whilst delivering a scheme that worked in line with Universal Credit. Impact analysis was carried out as part of this modelling process.

A full report including the impact analysis from Policy in Practice is here:



Policy in practice
report Model 5.pdf

Based on the overall impact on Council Tax Support recipients the scale of impact has been recorded as significant. This is due to the level of reductions in Council Tax Support for almost all of the Working Age caseload.

The majority of employed households will face lower support under this model. A few low-earning households will gain support, however, any increase in support is likely to be slight (around 3%). Households in receipt of legacy benefits lose more compared to retention of the current scheme than those in receipt of Universal Credit creating more equitable support between the two.

Out of work households lose approximately 13% support. This model does not support the most vulnerable households.

This model has a negative impact on larger households so disproportionately affects families.

The majority of working households will lose support. 73% of self-employed households and 43% of employed households lose more than £5/week.

Some households in receipt of legacy benefits are particularly affected:

- Couples with children lose 41%
- Couples without children lose 39%
- Tenants lose 29%
- Self-employed lose 63%
- Employed lose 33%
- Households in higher CT bands lose over 32%

All household types in receipt of legacy benefits will see their support fall. Couples with or without children in receipt of legacy benefits will have significant reduction in support of over 30%. Households with children in receipt of Universal Credit will see a slight increase in support but this is less than 3.2%.

14. Equality Improvement Plan

Please list all the equality objectives, actions and targets that result from the Equality Analysis (continue on separate sheets as necessary). These now need to be included in the relevant service plan for mainstreaming and performance management purposes.

Equality Objective	Action	Target	Officer responsible	By when
Outcomes of the services by equalities groups effectively monitored to ensure no adverse impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring the options chose didn't impact any one group within the working age population more than another. Age is not assumed in this as pensioners are on a different scheme to working age people both in current and proposed format. Monitor through quarterly contract management meetings and annual review 	Ensure the negative impact of the proposals is across the board and no particular group is adversely impacted.	Darren Smith and Allan Clark	Ongoing
Stakeholder feedback to evidence impact on claimants	Review stakeholder feedback as reported in annual service review.	Ensure the needs of the most vulnerable are met	Darren Smith and Allan Clark	Ongoing
Impact of change monitoring	Review the Council Tax Collection rates, number of CTS claims and Section 13A applications	Ensure the needs of the most vulnerable are met	Darren Smith and Allan Clark	Ongoing

1st Authorised signature (Project Manager)	2nd Authorised Signature (Service lead)
Darren Smith	Allan Clark
Date: 14th November 2018	Date: 14th November 2018

London Borough of Barnet's Discretionary Council Tax Hardship Scheme (DCTHS) and Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) Scheme – December 2018

Part 1 Provisions Common to both Schemes (DCTH & DHP)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Barnet has as one of its strategic objectives 'to build family resilience- 'Building resilience in residents and managing demand...so that families are able to help themselves and stop problems from escalating'.

The two discretionary schemes will contribute towards this by assisting individuals with their housing, council tax and related costs to:

- prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies
- encourage and sustain people in employment
- encourage sustainable placement of children in foster care and independent living for care leavers
- support for vulnerable individuals or families who are in unsustainable tenancies but cannot move to accommodation they can afford for reasons such as health, disability, or child protection
- provide support for victims of domestic violence who are trying to move to a place of safety

The Discretionary Council Tax Hardship Scheme (DCTHS) and Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) are two of the three discretionary funds operated by the Revenues and Benefits service, the other being the Local Welfare Provision scheme (currently administered by The Family Fund Service on behalf of the Council). Both schemes (DHP & DCTH) are discretionary, meaning that there is no statutory right to payment. The DCTHS scheme is funded entirely by the Council with the DHP scheme being mainly funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The policy sets out how DCTHP & DHP claims are decided and the factors the council considers when deciding whether to grant or refuse an award.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) can be made to anyone receiving either housing benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit (UC) that has a shortfall between their benefit and their rent. An award can be made when the council decides extra financial assistance with rent should be granted.

Discretionary Council Tax Hardship Scheme Awards will only be made to

claimants under the following circumstances:

- The applicant has an outstanding amount of council tax liability
- The council is satisfied that the applicant is suffering from financial hardship
- The applicant has exhausted all other options with regard to improving his or her current financial circumstances
- The authority has sufficient funds and making an award would not unreasonably impact on its ability to make awards to other claimants.

The application does not relate to an empty property normally let on a commercial basis.

1.2 Legislation

In administering both the DCTH & DHP policies, the council must act in accordance with the relevant legislation. The following legislation is relevant to both schemes and must take account of guidance the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) issues;

- The Local Government Finance Act 2012
- Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Child Poverty Act 2010
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Act 1996
- Armed Forces Covenant
- Social Security Act 1992
- Fraud Act 2000
- The Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations (S.I.2001/1167) as amended by the Council Tax Benefit Abolition (Consequential Provisions) Regulations 2013 (S.I. 2013/458), which came into force on 1 April 2013;
- The Universal Credit (Consequential, Supplementary, Incidental and Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2013 (S.I. 2013/630), which came into force on 29 April 2013.

1.3 Exercise of Discretion

1.3.1 Each case will be decided on its merits but will be subject to the limits faced by the authority in terms of expenditure and statutory restrictions. Decisions may be made in conjunction with any other information about the applicant known to London Borough of Barnet or its partners.

1.3.2 In exceptional cases, the Council may make decisions which fall outside the provisions of this policy. Greater weight will be given to applications which demonstrate they are taking steps to move to a more sustainable financial position.

- 1.3.3 The Council will, in all cases, endeavour to ensure that all members of the community are able to access assistance offered by this scheme regardless of race, gender, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status and/or disability.
- 1.3.4 It will ensure that the decision-making process is fair and that no person is disadvantaged by virtue of their membership of one or more of the groups listed in the above paragraph.
- 1.3.5 Monthly payments to meet a shortfall in benefit against rent will normally be limited to a period of no more than 12 months. Payments for more than one month may be made conditional on the claimant providing evidence that they have been seeking work and/or affordable accommodation.
- 1.3.6 Lump sum payments will normally be made to pay for moving costs for those seeking to move from unsustainable tenancies to more affordable accommodation. Where an applicant is not able to demonstrate steps are being taken to move towards more sustainable housing situations, evidence of barriers preventing them from doing so may be taken into account, particularly if it can be demonstrated that the costs of alternative courses of action would be greater than providing support. This is more likely to apply to applicants with the following characteristics:
- People with physical or mental disabilities
 - People with very poor physical or mental health
 - People caring for vulnerable people, e.g. foster carers, parents of children in care or in need, adoptive or perspective adoptive parents, carers of people who do not reside with them who would otherwise be in receipt of LBB funded health or social care services
 - Care leavers.
- 1.3.7 For people facing temporary hardship or a shortfall in their rent, they may be supported for some or all of the period of hardship or shortfall, however please see paragraph 1.3.5.

1.4 Anti-fraud statement

Both schemes are discretionary and are subject to significant financial constraints. The making of a false declaration with a view to obtaining or increasing an award may amount to a criminal offence under the Fraud Act 2000. Where the council suspects that an offence may have been committed the matter will be investigated and appropriate action taken including the initiation of criminal proceedings.

No award of any type will be made if an applicant knowingly makes a false statement in order to obtain or increase an award under the provisions of these schemes.

2 Aims and Objectives

2.1 Barnet has as one of its strategic objectives 'to create the right environment to support families and individuals that need it – promoting independence, learning and well-being'. The DCTHS & DHP schemes will contribute towards this by assisting individuals with their Housing and Council Tax related costs to:

- Provide a wider umbrella of support by
 - helping claimants through personal crisis
 - help prevent homelessness
 - sustain tenancies
 - alleviate poverty
 - safeguard residents and children
 - keeping families together and
 - supporting the elderly in the community.
- Encourage and sustain people in employment
- Encourage sustainable placement of children in foster care and promoting good outcomes for children as well as support care leavers to achieve & sustain independence
- Support people impacted by welfare reform to pay their rent whilst a longer-term solution is found
- Support for vulnerable individuals or families who are in unsustainable tenancies but cannot move to accommodation they can afford for reasons such as health, disability, or child protection
- Provide support for victims of domestic violence who are trying to move to a place of safety.

3. General Principles in deciding all DCTHS & DHP claims

3.1 This Section sets out factors considered when making decisions on all claims for DCTHS & DHP. How the amount and duration of an award is decided is also included in this section, along with guidance on repeat claims. However, the factors listed in this policy are not an exhaustive list, but only an indication of what the council may consider and the policy also does not give a definitive list of factors. As awards are discretionary, there is no limit on the factors that can be taken into account and each individual claim is decided on merit.

- There are no statutory rights as the scheme is discretionary
- Every application shall be dealt with on its own merit in accordance with legislation, the DWP guidance and good practice
- As well as protecting the most vulnerable in society, payments will be used to further the aims of supporting people to secure paid employment and/or to secure sustainably affordable accommodation

- Neither DCTHS or DHP will normally be used to provide ongoing support to residents – they will be deployed on a temporary basis to help people continue to pay their rent/council tax whilst resolving their financial position to be sustainable for them in the longer term
- Claimants in the most vulnerable situations may be more likely to receive support / receive them for longer periods
- Claimants will be expected to take personal responsibility for taking action to mitigate the impact of welfare reforms. This action will normally be either to secure work or to move to more affordable accommodation
- Granting of awards may be made conditional on claimants demonstrating that they have taken action to move to a sustainable financial position, e.g. evidence that they have applied for jobs and/or are seeking more affordable accommodation.

3.2 Factors considered for all claims

When deciding claims, the council will consider the following:

- The extent to which the applicant is facing the risk of being made homeless
- The negative impact refusing an award could have on any children living in the applicant's household
- The negative impact refusing an award could have on any disabled members of the applicant's household or any household members with very poor physical or mental health
- The negative impact refusing an award could have on any household members who have reached state pension age
- With the exception of disability living allowance and personal independence payments, all the income and savings the applicant has and the extent to which income and savings can reasonably be used to pay rent
- The income of other household members such as non-dependants (it may be reasonable for a non-dependant to contribute more towards rent and other household expenses than the amount of the non-dependant deduction determined by regulations).

3.3 The amount of the award

In the overall approach to a DHP &/or DCTHS claim it is expected that housing & council tax costs should be prioritised within a household budget. Most applicants will therefore be expected to make a contribution towards the shortfall between their benefit and their rent/Council tax liability unless there are exceptional circumstances. So, in the main, awards are unlikely to cover the full shortfall. The amount of each contribution will be decided on a case by case basis and household expenditure may need to be adjusted in order to meet the contribution towards the shortfall.

3.4 Duration of awards

DCTHS & DHP awards are only made for fixed periods and they are not intended as a long-term solution. In the majority of cases the award will be made in order to give time for the applicant to change their circumstances which might be:

- Finding alternative cheaper accommodation
- Finding work
- Budgeting towards paying more rent / council tax
- Reducing non priority discretionary expenditure.

When making the award the council will set out the actions it is reasonable to expect the applicant to take to avoid needing a DCTHS/DHP award for the long term. Depending on the individual circumstances of each case, the DCTHS/DHP will be awarded for up to 52 weeks to allow time for the actions necessary. The most common period will be 26 weeks as it is considered this is a reasonable period to allow for the completion of actions necessary to avoid long-term reliance on DCTHS/DHP. In addition, it is reasonable in most of cases to review an applicant's circumstances after 26 weeks.

4 Applications

4.1 Applications should be made using the London Borough of Barnet application form, but any application for DCTHS/DHP made in writing will be accepted and further information requested if necessary. We will accept applications from the tenant, their representative or the landlord. Applications to the Barnet Crisis Fund will automatically be treated as applications for a DCTHS/DHP so that the Crisis Fund assessors can recommend a DCTHS/DHP award where that is more appropriate.

4.2 Information Required in Support of a Claim

When claiming a payment under this scheme a person must provide

- All the information requested in the claim form and
- Any other information or evidence requested by the authority which it considers necessary to determine an award.

If an application does not contain all the information required the authority shall give the claimant 1 calendar month to provide any missing or additional information.

No award will be made if a claimant fails, without reasonable cause, to comply with the above requirements.

4.3 Financial Assessment

The authority will conduct a financial assessment when considering whether to make a discretionary award and will consider:

The claimant's income and capital by

- Calculating the income and capital available to the applicant and his/her household and;
- Adding to this any resources which the authority believes the applicant or partner could reasonably obtain,

Then deducting the following

- Essential expenditure on basic necessities such as food, clothing and utilities and any
- Unavoidable expenditure which the claimant is required to meet by law or by contract and which the claimant has taken reasonable measures to reduce or avoid.

4.4 Financial hardship;

The authority's long-term aim is to help people become self-sufficient. Discretionary funds are limited and cannot be relied upon as a permanent measure. If a claimant is experiencing financial hardship the authority may review his income and expenditure and recommend that the claimant act to improve his/her finances. For example, by;

Increasing income by	Evidence that may be required
Claiming any benefits to which there may be an entitlement	Decision letters from the DWP or HMRC Evidence of engagement with a Welfare Benefits Advisor or the Welfare Reform Task Force
Increasing hours of work or seeking a pay rise	Letters from employers or prospective employers
Applying for better paid employment	Evidence of engagement with an employment support provider

Reducing expenditure by	Evidence that may be required
Reviewing the current tariffs paid for utilities, phone/broadband contracts etc and terminating or reducing expenditure on any contracts for the provision of unnecessary services	A statement detailing which tariffs have been considered, and if not taken the reasons why and evidence of any contracts which cannot be terminated or reduced.
Reviewing regular household expenditure with a view to achieving a reduction	Record of expenditure
Keeping a budget of income and expenditure	A budget plan
Attending a budget workshop or online training to understand how to maintain a balanced budget. This may include attending a Personal Budgeting Support session as part of Universal Support provision.	Copies of emails confirming that training has taken place.

<p>Considering moving somewhere more affordable or negotiating a lower rent with their landlord</p> <p>Registering with Fresh Start scheme or Mutual Exchange Scheme provided by Barnet Homes</p>	<p>A record of the properties considered in order to move to more affordable accommodation, please note that the authority can assist with rent deposits.</p>
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Dealing with debts by	Evidence that may be required
Contacting creditors to negotiate an affordable repayment plans	Letters confirming repayment plans
Taking advice from a debt management company authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) via the national debt helpline	Correspondence from the Nation Debt Helpline or other FCA regulated body
By changing lifestyle/spending habits to avoid incurring further debt	A statement explaining changes to spending habits and evidenced by receipts and/or itemised bank statements.

In any case the authority must be satisfied that the claimant has taken reasonable steps to improve their financial situation. In the absence of such evidence the authority may decide that any further award shall be made at a reduced rate or that no award shall be made at all.

Part 2 Provisions Specific to DHP

5. Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs)

A DHP is a payment made from a grant given to the authority to help claimants who require further financial assistance towards housing costs. To be eligible a person must be in receipt of either:

- Housing Benefit (HB) or
- Universal Credit (UC) with housing costs towards rental liability.

5.1 Meaning of Further Financial Assistance

The phrase ‘further financial assistance’ is not defined in law and is left for the authority to determine. For the purpose of this policy it means a need for a payment where:

- there is a shortfall between HB or UC (housing costs) and the contractual rent and

- the person is unable to meet their housing costs from their available resources.

5.2 Purpose of the scheme

The primary purpose of this scheme is to prevent homelessness by;

- a) Helping Barnet residents who cannot afford to meet their housing costs by reducing the impact of certain changes to the housing benefit and universal credit regulations on those who have been affected by:
 - The overall benefit cap
 - The limitation on the number of bedrooms occupied by tenants housed in the social sector
 - The freezing of Local Housing Allowance rates
 - The introduction of the 2-child limit.
- b) Assisting people with the costs of moving to more affordable accommodation or, where such a move is not viable, assisting them in retaining their current accommodation.
- c) Providing help and support people who wish to work with a view to improving their financial situation.
- d) Providing short term assistance to people who are unable to meet their housing costs because of financial hardship.

5.3 Essential criteria for a DHP

Before making a payment, the authority must be satisfied that there is:

- A valid claim for DHP and
- The claimant is in receipt of Housing Benefit (HB) or Universal Credit (Housing Costs element) (UC/HC) and
- There is a shortfall between the HB/UC award and housing costs.

5.4 Meaning of Housing Costs

In general, 'housing costs' usually refers to rental liability, although the term can be interpreted more widely to include:

- rent in advance
- deposits and
- other lump sum costs associated with a housing need such as removal costs and or rent arrears where applicant is under threat of eviction
- The shortfall between HB/UC and contractual rental liability.

5.5 Claims for DHP

A claim may be made up to 13 weeks in advance of an anticipated need for DHP arising and should be made by the person who is claiming DHP or UC.

An application may be accepted from a person acting upon that person's behalf if the council is satisfied it is reasonable to do so.

5.6 What a DHP can cover

DHPs are intended to support people who are receiving Housing Benefit or Universal Credit within Barnet and need additional support to cover housing-related costs.

It can be awarded to cover an on-going shortfall including but not limited to:

- reductions in HB or UC where the benefit cap has been applied
- reductions in HB or UC due to the maximum rent (social sector) size criteria
- reductions in HB or UC as a result of LHA restrictions
- rent officer restrictions such as local reference rent or shared accommodation rate
- non-dependent deductions in HB, or housing cost contributions in UC
- rent shortfalls to prevent a household becoming homeless
- income taper reduction
- any other legislative change that limits the amount of HB/UC housing costs payable, for example the removal of the family premium.

A DHP can be awarded for a rent deposit or rent in advance for a property in or outside the borough if they are already entitled to HB or UC at their present home. When awarding a DHP for a rent deposit or rent in advance, the authority must be satisfied that:

- the property is affordable for the tenant and
- the tenant has a valid reason to move and
- the deposit or rent in advance is reasonable

Lump sum payments for moves out of the Borough would normally have to be supported by the Housing Options Service or similar housing adviser.

The authority will also consider whether the claimant:

- is due to have a deposit or rent in advance in respect of their existing tenancy returned to them, and whether that deposit can be secured against the new tenancy in time or
- has received assistance towards a rent deposit, for example, a rent deposit guarantee scheme or similar.

5.6.1 Obligations

Before agreeing to make such an award the authority may request that:

- The claimant signs a declaration agreeing to move in, and in the event this obligation will not be fulfilled, notify the authority immediately. Failure to do so may result in overpaid DHP which will be recovered from the claimant.
- The landlord protects any deposit paid in a Government approved tenancy deposit protection scheme. Further information can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/tenancy-deposit-protection/overview>,

5.6.2 What DHPs do not cover

- Service or rental charges ineligible for HB
- Following the abolition of council tax benefit from April 2013, DHPs can no longer be awarded towards council tax liability.

5.7 DHPs on multiple homes

The authority may consider a DHP in respect of two homes if

- The claimant is fleeing domestic violence or
- a claimant is temporarily absent from their main home and it considers there is good reason for that absence e.g. to stay near a child receiving treatment in hospital or
- The claimant has an unavoidable rental liability on more than one property.

5.8 Backdating

5.8.1 An award of DHP may be backdated subject to the following restrictions;

- No award can be made for a date earlier than 2 July 2001 and
- No award can be made in respect of a period when neither HB nor a relevant award of UC was in payment.
- No award can be made if there is no shortfall between the HB/UC amount and contractual rent for the period of backdating.

5.8.2 An award may be backdated if it is reasonable to do so and;

- The claimant is facing action for rent arrears which may lead to eviction or
- The existence of rent arrears is preventing the claimant from taking some form of action to reduce his rental liability such as bidding for more affordable accommodation

- There has been a change in the claimant's circumstances which prevents him from being able to maintain an existing arrangement to clear rent arrears or
- There are some other exceptional circumstances in existence which warrant a retrospective award being made.

5.8.3 When making a decision about backdating, regard shall be given to the Court of Appeal's decision in R v. LB Lambeth, ex parte Gargett which sets out that any HB already paid towards 'housing costs' must be deducted when calculating the amount of a DHP to avoid duplicate provision.

5.9 Circumstances where a DHP may be refused

A DHP may be refused in the following circumstances:

- The applicant has entered into an unaffordable tenancy recklessly
- The applicant has received a recoverable overpayment of DHP and has failed to take reasonable measures to repay it. Reasonable measures may include making no repayment if it is unaffordable.
- The claimant has failed to comply with a DHP information/evidence request within the permitted timescale
- An award that would be so high that the authority believes it would unreasonably impact on its ability to make awards to other claimants unless a lower amount can be awarded which will make the tenancy sustainable for the claimant
- The Claimant has failed to comply with a recommendation attached to a previous award about improving their financial situation
- The claimant has rent arrears which the authority is satisfied were accrued with an intention to obtain social housing or an award under this scheme
- Subject to a disregard of £500, the claimant has capital more than the DHP award being made.

5.10 Circumstances where a DHP cannot be considered

There are certain elements of a claimant's rent that the HB and UC regulations exclude so they cannot be included as 'housing costs' for the purposes of a DHP.

- Ineligible charges:*** service charges which are ineligible for HB cannot be covered by a DHP. These are as specified in Schedule 1 to the Housing Benefit Regulations and Schedule 1 to the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations.
- Increases in rent due to outstanding rent arrears:*** under Regulation 11(3) of the Housing Benefit Regulations and Regulation 11(2) of the

Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) Regulations, where a claimant's rent is increased because outstanding arrears owed by the claimant in respect of their current or former property, the shortfall cannot be covered by a DHP.

c) Sanctions and reductions in benefit including any:

- Reduction in Income Support (IS) or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA(IB)) due to a Reduced Benefit Direction (RBD) for failure to comply with the Child Support Agency in arranging maintenance
- Reduction in benefit because of non-attendance at a work-focused interview. This applies both where the person's HB is reduced and when any other benefit that the person is receiving (such as IS) is subject to a sanction
- Reduction or loss of benefit due to a JSA employment sanction
- Reduction in benefit due to a JSA sanction for 16/17 year olds – for young people who receive JSA under a Severe Hardship Direction
- Restriction in benefit due to a breach of a community service order, or reduction in UC due to a sanction as specified under regulations 100 to 114 of the UC Regulations 2013
- Shortfalls caused by HB or UC overpayment recovery.

d) Benefit suspensions: Where HB or UC is suspended either because there is a general doubt about entitlement or because a claimant has failed to supply information pertinent to their claim.

5.11 Calculation of Award

5.11.1 The maximum level of a DHP award

If the purpose of the DHP is to meet an on-going rental liability, the level of DHP shall not exceed;

- the weekly HB eligible rent, or
- The monthly amount calculated in accordance with Schedule 4 of the UC regulations (i.e. the value stated for housing costs on a UC award notice).

Any HB or UC already paid towards 'housing costs' shall be deducted when calculating the amount of a DHP to avoid duplicate provision.

5.11.2 The basic DHP award

After carrying out a financial assessment any amount by which income exceeds expenditure shall be deducted from the shortfall between the HB/UC. The result shall be the basic DHP awards

The basic DHP award may be adjusted depending on the personal circumstances of the claimant.

In cases where a claimant is subject to the social size criteria DHP will only be considered for a 1 bedroom shortfall after 21 weeks, unless the claimant is experiencing exceptionally serious financial hardship.

6 Method of payment

- 6.1 The Benefits Service will decide on the most appropriate person to pay, the method and time of payments, based on the particular circumstances of each case. Where DHP is awarded in respect of council rental liability any DHP will be credited to the relevant housing rent account and where a DHP is awarded as a lump sum payment for rent in advance or a deposit payment will usually be made direct to the landlord.
- 6.2 Payments to meet a weekly or monthly rental liability will be made at the same frequency as the HB or UC payment and will be paid to
- In respect of an on-going award the person who receives the HB or UC payment or
 - In respect of rent arrears payments, to the landlord or
 - In respect of payments made to help a claimant move into a new home, the person entitled to receive that payment.
- 6.3 When making a DHP to assist the claimant with securing a new tenancy, the authority will pay the following persons
- Rent deposit – to the landlord
 - Rent in advance – to the landlord
 - Removal costs – to the removal company
- 6.4 The authority may consider making payment to the claimant in exceptional cases.

7. Notification of the decision

- 7.1 The authority will notify the claimant or appointee and the persons to whom payment is to be made as soon as possible after the decision is made. The notification to the claimant will contain the following:
- a) If an award is not made:
- the reason for the refusal and
 - details of any action the claimant may be advised to take to increase their chances of a future claim being successful
- b) If an award is made:
- The amount
 - The start and end dates
 - The manner in which payment will be made

- A brief explanation of the way in which the award has been calculated
- Details of any recommendations made associated with the making of the award
- Duty to notify any changes in circumstances.

- c) If payment is made other than to the claimant, it will include:
- The name and address of the person in respect of whom payment is being made
 - The amount and date of payment
 - The reason for payment.

7.2 All notifications will contain details of how the decision may be challenged.

8. Changes in circumstances

- 8.1 A person who is in receipt of DHP or has made a claim for DHP that has not yet been decided must notify the authority of any changes which may affect an award of DHP. There is a separate and statutory duty to notify the DWP or the authority of any changes which may affect HB or UC.
- 8.2 This notification must be provided as soon as is practicable and in any case within 1 calendar month of the change.

9. Overpayments

- 9.1 The authority may review an award at any time, and as a result of that review may decide that DHP has been overpaid. An overpayment will be recoverable if it arose due to:
- A failure to disclose or misrepresentation of a material fact or
 - An error made by the authority when the claim was decided.
- 9.2 Any such decision made will carry a right of review.

10. Reviews and Appeals

10.1 Review

- a) A claimant may require that the authority review any decision within 1 calendar month of the date of the decision, a request for a review must be submitted as follows:
- In writing to the authority and

- State the grounds on which the decision is being challenged and include any evidence to support that challenge.
- b) On receipt of an application for a review, an officer, other than the original decision maker shall, within 1 month, consider the decision afresh in light of the representations and any new evidence available to it and advise the claimant:
- Whether or not the decision has been changed and
 - the reasons for that decision.
- a) If the decision is not being changed the person may appeal against that refusal.

11. Appeals

- 11.1 If after a review the person is still aggrieved, an appeal can be made by writing to the authority within 1 calendar month of the date of review decision stating the grounds on which the decision is being challenged.
- 11.2 On receipt of an appeal an officer, who is senior to both the decision maker and the officer who conducted the review shall, within a month, consider the following matters:
- Whether all relevant matters were considered and whether an appropriate weight was attached to them and
 - Whether any irrelevant matters were considered and
 - Whether this policy had been applied correctly and
 - Whether the decision is a reasonable one having regard to above matters.
- 11.3 After considering the above, the officer shall either:
- Notify the claimant that the decision will not be changed, provide an explanation for that refusal, and confirm that no further action will be taken in respect of the matter or;
 - Return the matter to the officer who conducted the review to remake the decision within 14 days. The new decision will carry a right of review.
- 11.4 If a person remains dissatisfied with a decision a challenge can only be raised via Barnet's formal complaints procedure or by way of Judicial Review.
- 11.5 DHPs are not Housing Benefit and therefore customers cannot appeal to the independent tribunal.

Part 3 Provisions Specific to DCTHS

12 Purpose of the scheme

- 12.1 The purpose of DCTHS is to relieve people in particular need of the requirement to meet all, or part of, their liability to pay the Council Tax.
- 12.2 Council Tax is a priority debt; taxpayers are therefore obliged to treat their liability as taking precedence over expenditure such as:
- Credit card debts
 - Hire purchase agreements (HP)
 - Unsecured bank and payday loans (loans that are not secured against your property)
 - Water bills
 - Sky/Broadband subscriptions
 - Car insurance
 - Loans from friends and family.
- 12.3 Therefore when deciding eligibility for a DCTHS, the test will be more stringent than for DHP.

13 Eligibility for DCTHS

A claimant will only be entitled to an award under this scheme if:

- The applicant has an outstanding amount of council tax liability
- The council is satisfied that the applicant is suffering from financial hardship
- The applicant has exhausted all other options with regard to improving his or her current financial circumstances
- The authority has sufficient funds and making an award would not unreasonably impact on its ability to make awards to other claimants
- The application does not relate to an empty property normally let on a commercial basis.

14. Claims

- 14.1 In most cases, the person who applies for a DCTHS is the person liable for Council Tax. However, an application may be accepted from another person appointed to act on behalf of the claimant at the authority's discretion.
- 14.2 Unlike DHP there is no statutory requirement that a claim be made for an award. The authority will consider making an award in the absence of a claim if:
- There are arrears of Council Tax and the council has obtained a liability order in respect of those arrears, and

- The council is satisfied that, based on information either already in its possession or provided to it by another agency, the person against whom any liability order has been obtained would receive an award were an application made, and
- Those arrears have not been accrued because of reckless spending
- It is appropriate to make such an award having regard to the principals of this policy.

15 Calculation of Award

15.1 The maximum level of a DCTHS award is the amount of Council Tax debt outstanding excluding costs of recovery such as summons costs and bailiff fees although these may be considered for waiver in exceptional circumstances.

15.2 Assessments of Award: Assistance may be claimed for historic liability, an on-going liability or both.

15.3 Backdated awards

In respect of an award for a past period the authority will satisfy itself

- As to the amount the applicant can afford to pay towards the debt on a weekly basis
- That the applicant was not able to pay part or all the amount of Council Tax outstanding at the time it fell due and that this inability was not due to financial mismanagement on the part of the applicant.

15.4 On-going awards

In respect of an award for a current period the authority will satisfy itself

- As to the amount that the applicant can afford to pay towards the liability on a weekly basis
- That the inability of the applicant to meet the liability was not caused by financial mismanagement/reckless spending.

15.5 In cases where an applicant is jointly and severally liable with one or more persons who are not his partner the council may, in lieu of the making of an award under this scheme, provide the applicant with an undertaking not to pursue the applicant for part or all of the Council Tax liability.

17 Determination of Awards

- 17.1 A person will only be considered to be suffering from financial hardship and consequently entitled to a reduction under this scheme if:
- after taking all reasonable measures, they are unable to meet their essential needs relating to heating, food and hygiene having regard to their age, health and family make up together with any expenditure which the person is required to meet by law and which s/he has taken reasonable steps to avoid or reduce.
 - the Council is satisfied that the financial hardship has not been caused by the Applicant's reckless or extravagant expenditure.

18 Payments

Every award will be made by reducing the Applicant's liability for council tax by way of a credit to the Council Tax account.

19. Notification of Decisions

19.1 A decision will be made within 1 month or as soon afterwards as is practicable of the council receiving a properly completed application and the satisfaction of any requests for information or evidence made as a result of that claim. The notification of this decision shall contain:

- The amount of any award
- The period of any award
- If no award is made a brief explanation of the reason for the decision
- Details of how to challenge the decision
- If an award is made, the duty to notify any change in circumstances
- Any recommendations made to improve current finances

20. Changes in circumstances

20.1 A person who is in receipt of DCTHP or has made a claim for DCTHP that has not yet been decided must notify the authority of any changes which may affect an award of DCTHP.

20.2 This notification must be provided as soon as is practicable and in any case within 1 calendar month of the change.

20.3 Date changes are applied from

A change in circumstances which would give rise to a change in the amount of DCTHP shall have effect from:

- a) The date the change occurred if:
- It is a change which will lead to a reduction in DCTHP or

- It is a change which will lead to an increase in DCTHP and the change was notified within 1 calendar month of that change or such longer time the authority considers reasonable.
- b) In all other cases, the change will be effective from the date of notification

21. Overpayments

- 21.1 The authority may review an award at any time, and as a result of that review may decide that DCTHP has been overpaid. An overpayment will be recoverable if the authority is satisfied:
- That the award was made, at least in part, as the result of a misrepresentation whether intentional or otherwise or
 - An error was made by the council when the award was made and, as a result of that error - the award was higher than it otherwise would have been.
- 21.2 Any recoverable DCTHP overpayment will be debited from the council tax account.

22. Disputes

- 22.1 A claimant may require that the authority review any decision by writing to the authority and stating the grounds on which it believes the decision to be wrong.
- 22.2 On receipt of an application for a review, the authority shall, within 2 months, consider the decision afresh in light of the representations and any new evidence available to it and advise the claimant:
- whether or not the decision has been changed and
 - the reasons for that decision.

23. Appeals

- 23.1 If after a review the person is still aggrieved, or the authority has failed to reply within 2 months, the person may lodge an appeal directly to:

Valuation Tribunal Service

Hepworth House

2 Trafford Court Doncaster, DN1 1PN

Telephone: 0300 123 1033

<http://www.valuationtribunal.gov.uk/Home.aspx>

23.2 Any appeal must be lodged within 2 months of the date of decision made by the authority or if the authority has failed to provide a response, within four months of the date on which the request for review was served.