

# **Council Tax Support Scheme 2019**

## **Final Consultation Report**

**18<sup>th</sup> October 2018 to 29<sup>th</sup> November 2018  
Consultation**

# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

1.	Consultation Detailed Findings - Respondents.....	4
1.1	Response to the consultation.....	5
1.2	General public and stakeholder response and profile from questionnaire.....	5
1.3	Protected Characteristics.....	7
1.4	Interpretation of the results.....	8
1.5	Calculating and reporting on results.....	8
2.	Consultation Detailed Findings - Results.....	8
2.1	Views on the key components of the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme....	9
2.2	Views on responses about the proposed Council Tax Support scheme.....	22
3.	Additional questions outside of the 6 key components.....	29
3.1	Views on reducing the expenditure of the Council Tax Support Scheme.....	29
3.2	Views on the overall proposal for the Council Tax Support Scheme.....	31
4.	Consultation Response – Written Responses.....	32
5.	Additional comments from questionnaire.....	32
6.	Conclusion.....	34
7.	Appendix A – Additional Comments from Questionnaire.....	35
8.	Appendix B – GLA written response.....	45
9.	Appendix C – Citizens Advice Barnet written response.....	51

## Table of Figures

Figure 1.1: General Public Sample Profile (Below).....	5
Figure 1.2: General public consultation sample profile – key demographics (above).....	7
Figure 1.3: Protected characteristic sample profile.....	8
Figure 2.1: The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the six key components of the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme (below).....	10
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).....	10
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.....	11
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).....	12
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.....	12
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).....	13
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.....	14
Figure 2.8: The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the aim to introduce simplified non-dependant deductions (below).....	15
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.....	15
.....	16
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).....	17
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.....	17
.....	18
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).....	18

# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

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. ....	18
.....	19
.....	19
Figure 2.14: The extent to which respondents agreed with the six key components of the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme (below) .....	20
Figure 2.15: The extent to which respondents disagreed with the six key components of the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme (below) .....	20
Figure 2.16: Graph showing how the responses compare collectively (below).....	21
Figure 2.17: If respondents agreed with the assumption “Do you agree with the introduction of an income banded scheme?” (below) .....	23
Figure 2.18: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the earning band levels that have been identified? (below) .....	23
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).....	24
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).....	24
Figure 2.21: Chart below shows the overall % of agreement and disagreement about simplifying Non-Dependant deductions (below).....	26
Figure 2.22: Graph depicting the closeness in responses to the question on Minimum Income Floor (below).....	27
Figure 2.23: Chart depicting the closeness in responses to the question on Child Care Disregards (below).....	29
Figure 2.24: Chart depicting the responses to the question on reducing the overall expenditure of the scheme (below) .....	31
Figure 2.25: Chart depicting the responses to the question on the overall proposal of the Council Tax Support scheme (below).....	32

## 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 11<sup>th</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup> 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.

# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

- 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)**

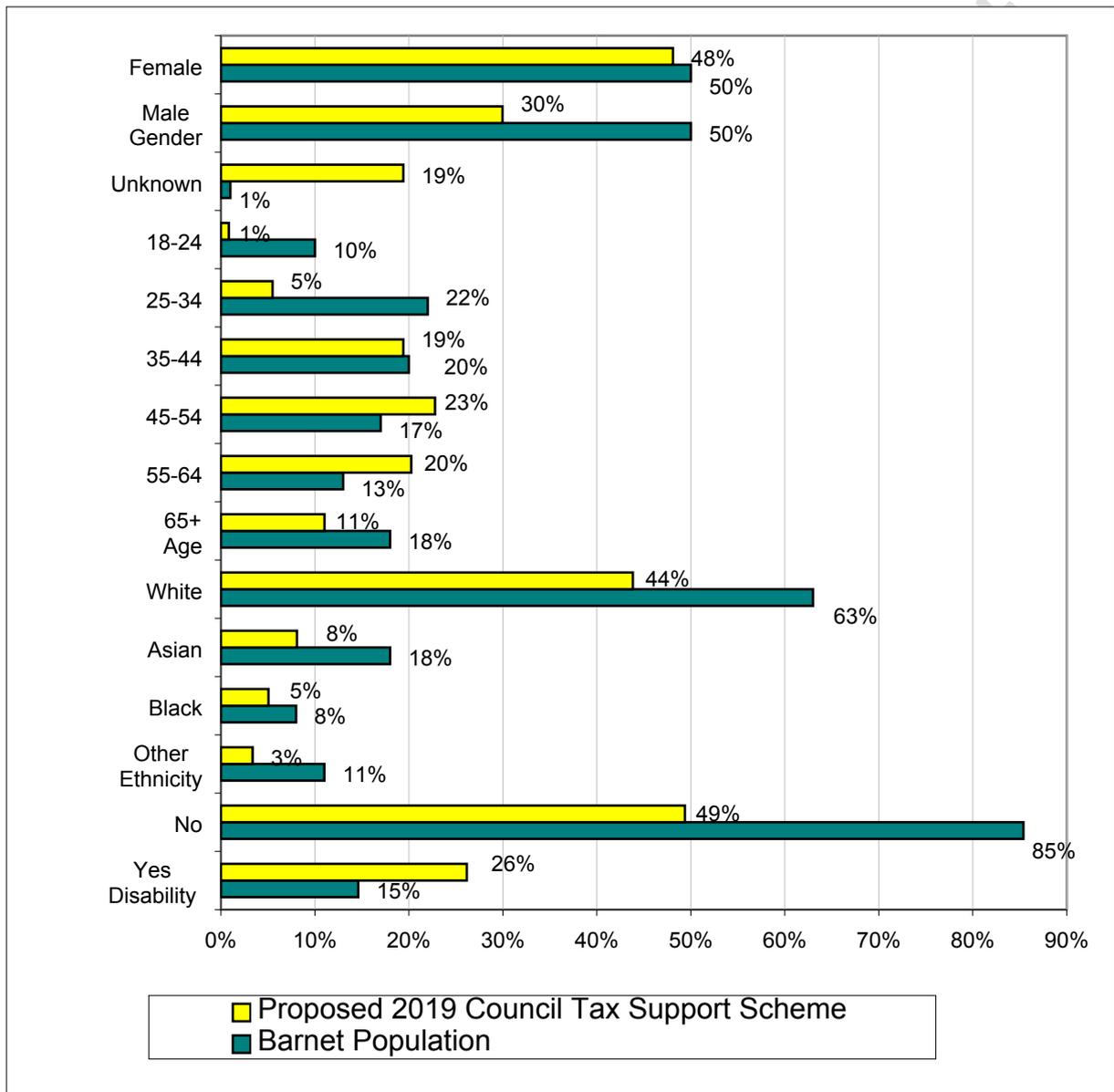
Stakeholder	Number	%
Resident	200	84.39%
Business	0	0%
Resident and business based in Barnet	3	1.27%
Public sector organisation and representatives	0	0%
Voluntary/community organisation	0	0%
Other	2	0.84%
Prefer not to say	1	0.42%
Not answered	32	13.50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>100%</b>

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.

# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

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	%
<b>Faith</b>		
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%
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>100%</b>

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

# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

Not answered	125	52.74%
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>100%</b>

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%
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 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

# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

## 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

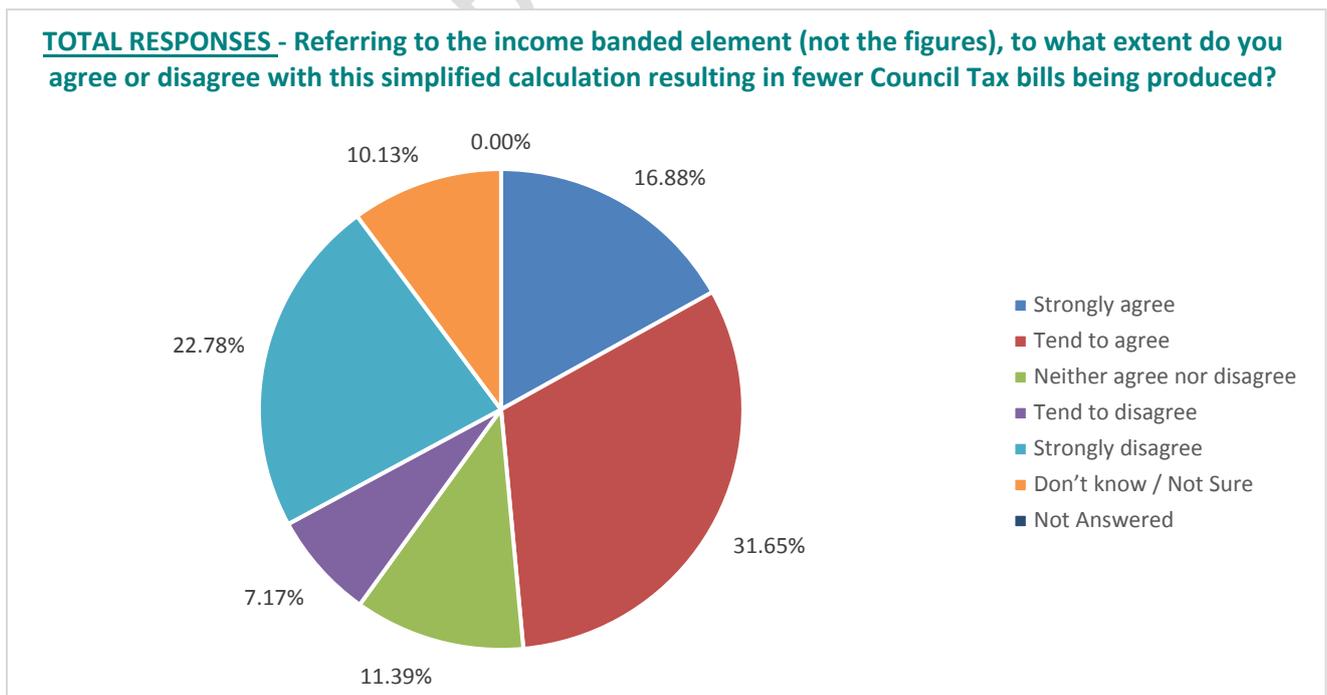
# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

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

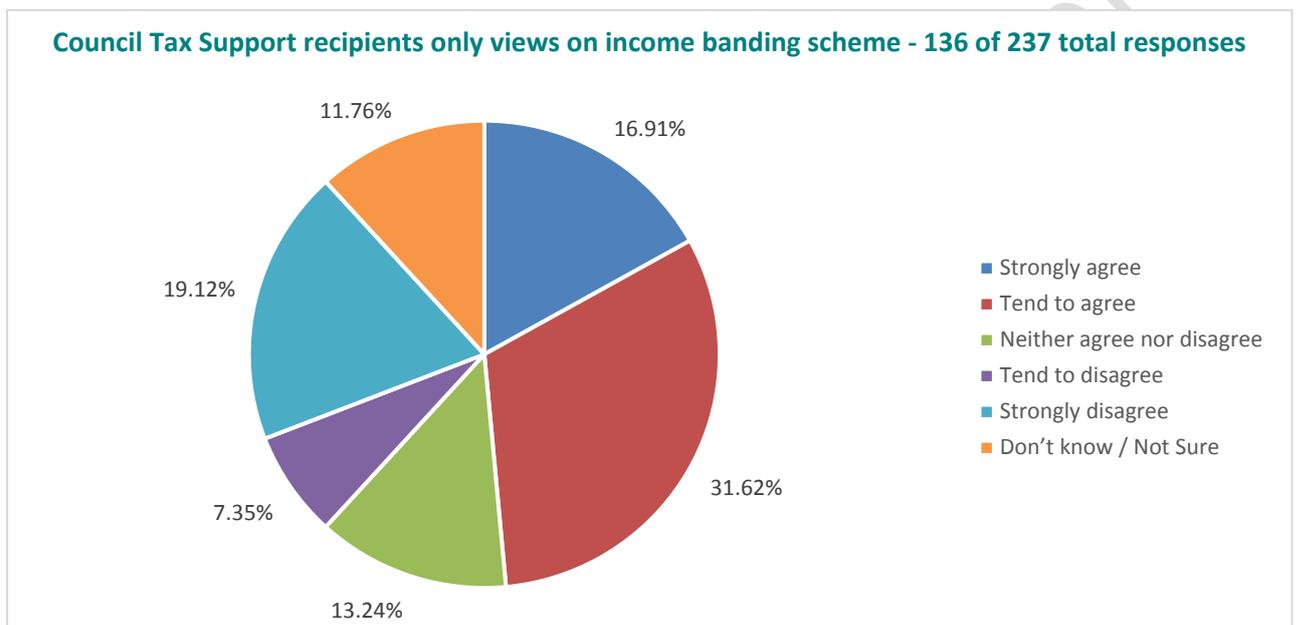
**Figure 2.2: The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the aim to introduce an income banded scheme in place of the current complex means tested scheme (below)**

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
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>237</b>

**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

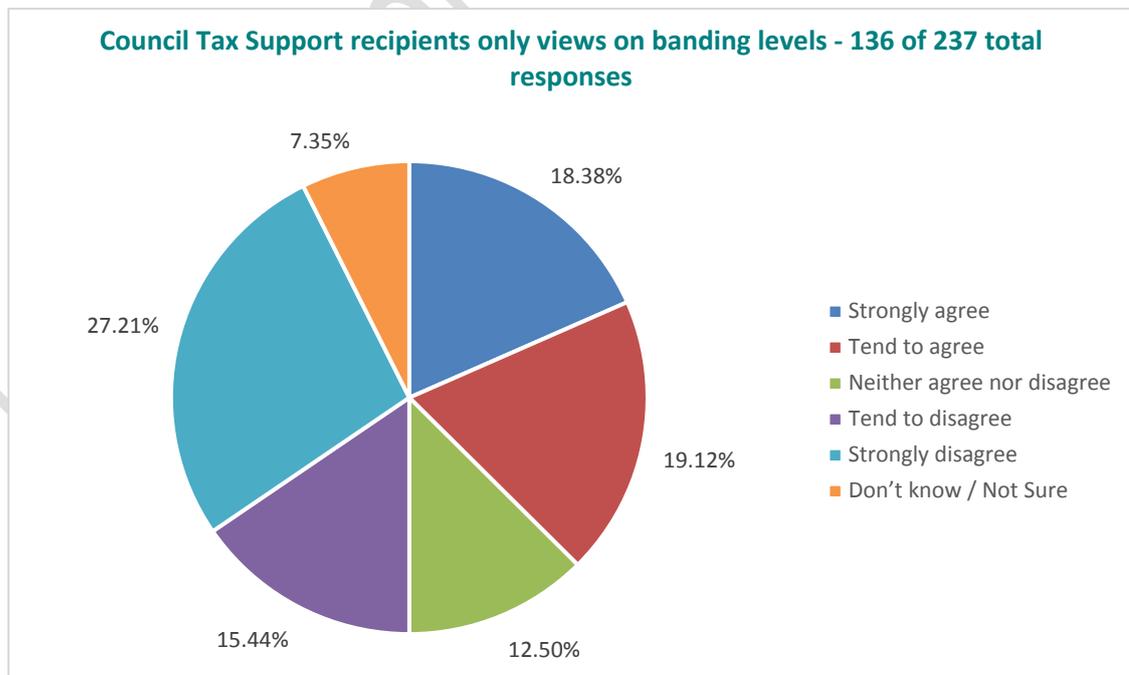
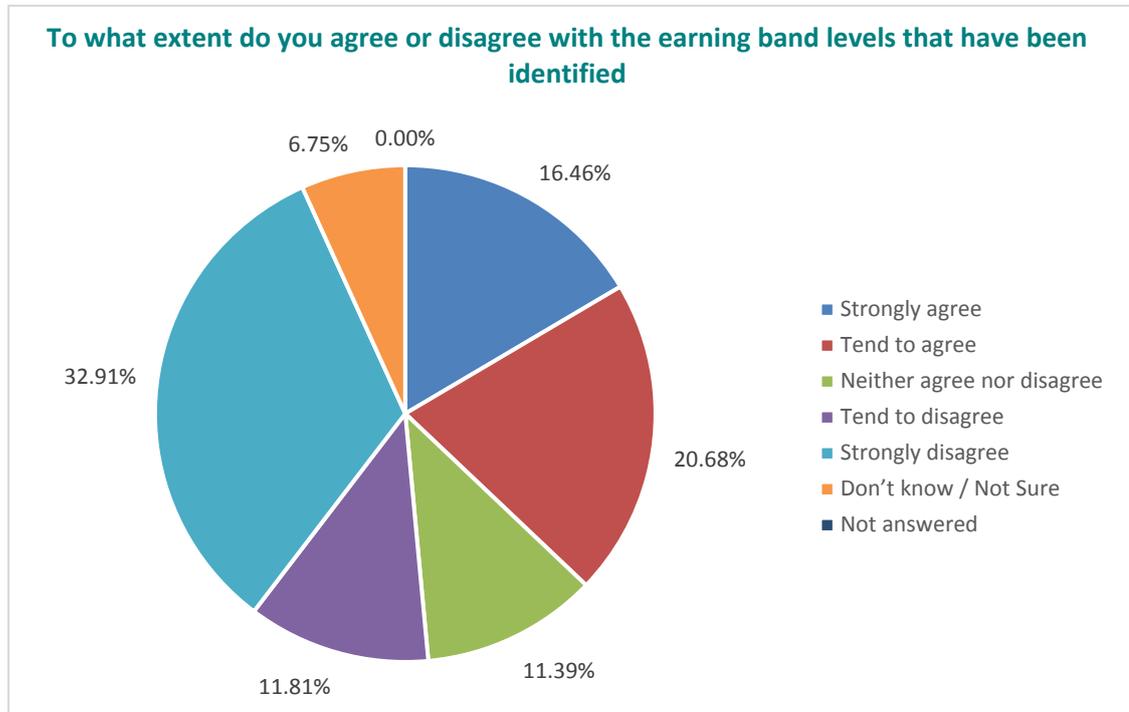


**Figure 2.4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the earning band levels that have been identified in the table above? (below).**

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
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>237</b>

# 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)**

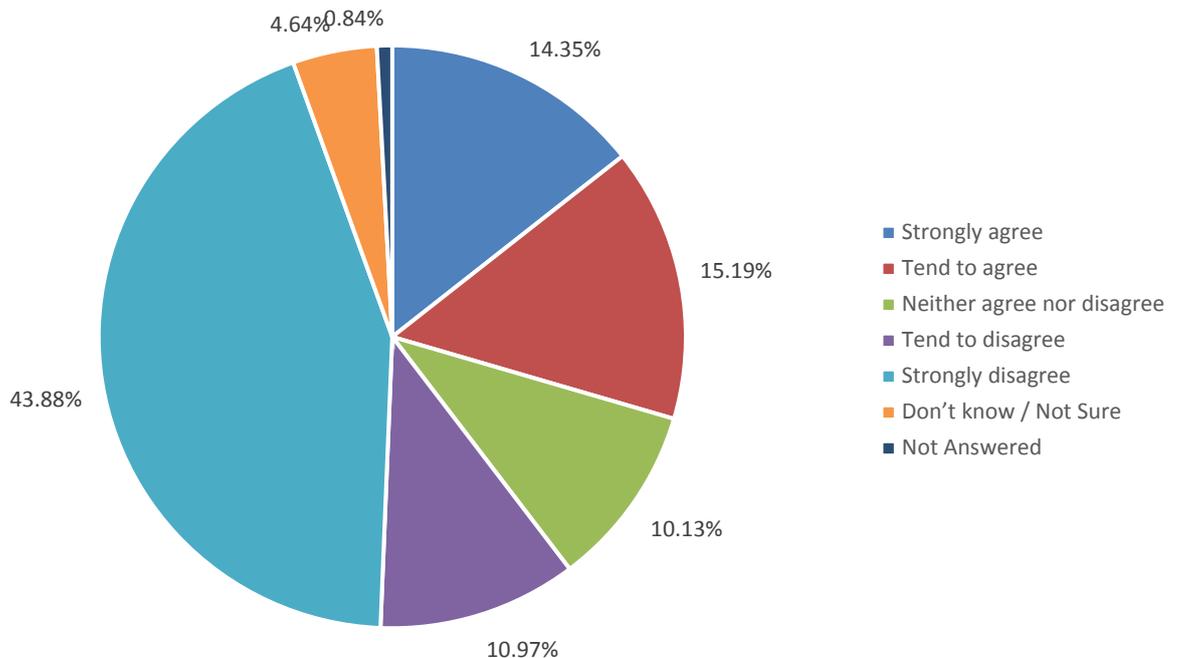
# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

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

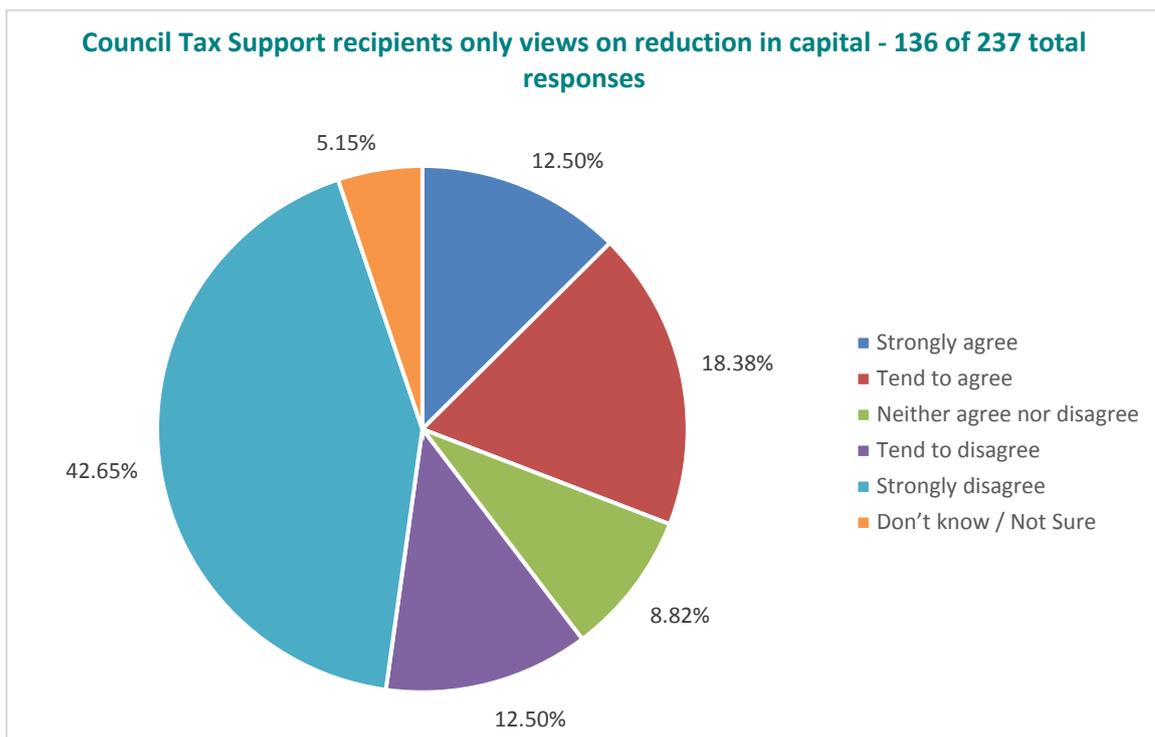
	%	Number
Strongly Agree	14.35%	34
Tend to agree	15.19%	36
Neither agree nor disagree	10.13%	24
Tend to disagree	10.97%	26
Strongly disagree	43.88%	104
Don't know / not sure	4.64%	11
Not Answered	0.84%	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>237</b>

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.

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



# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

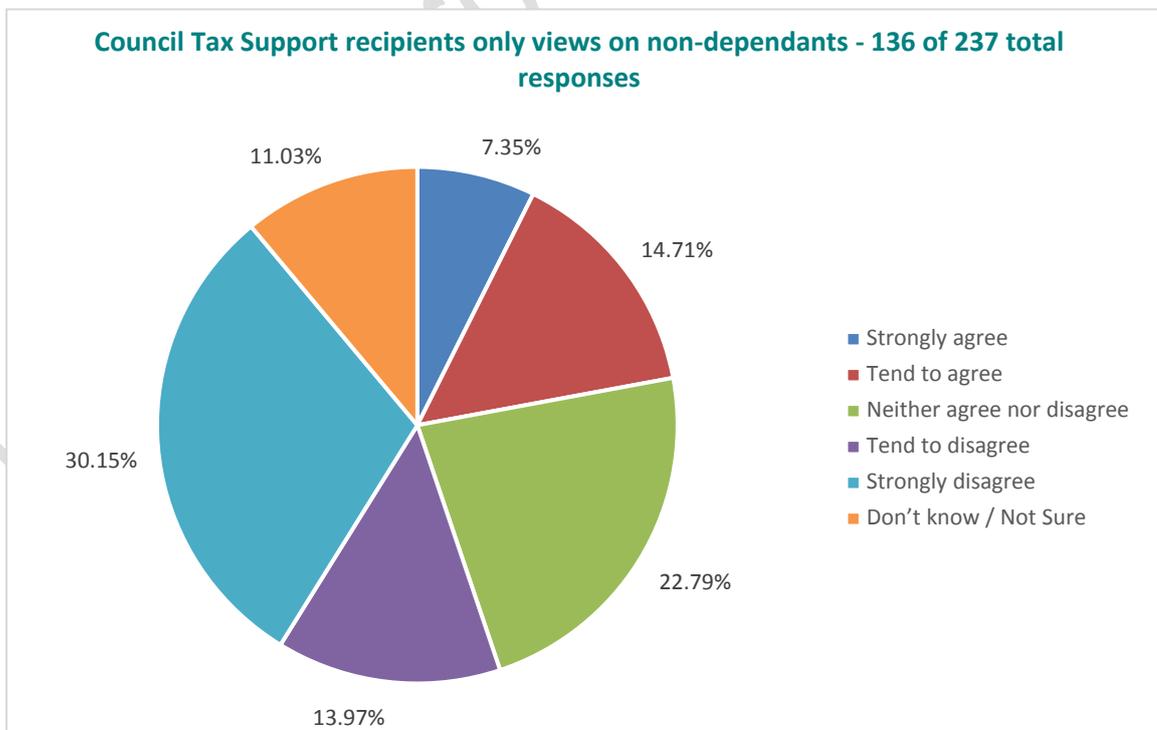
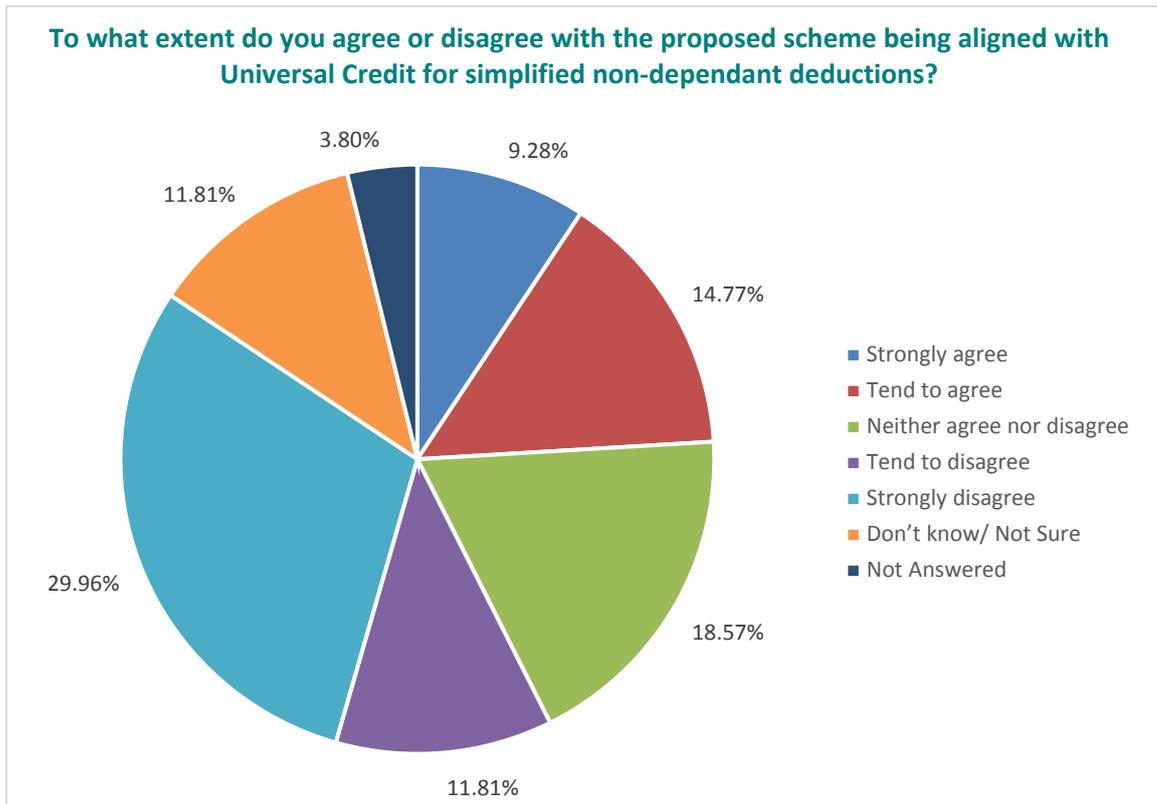


**Figure 2.8: The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the aim to introduce simplified non-dependant deductions (below)**

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
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>237</b>

**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

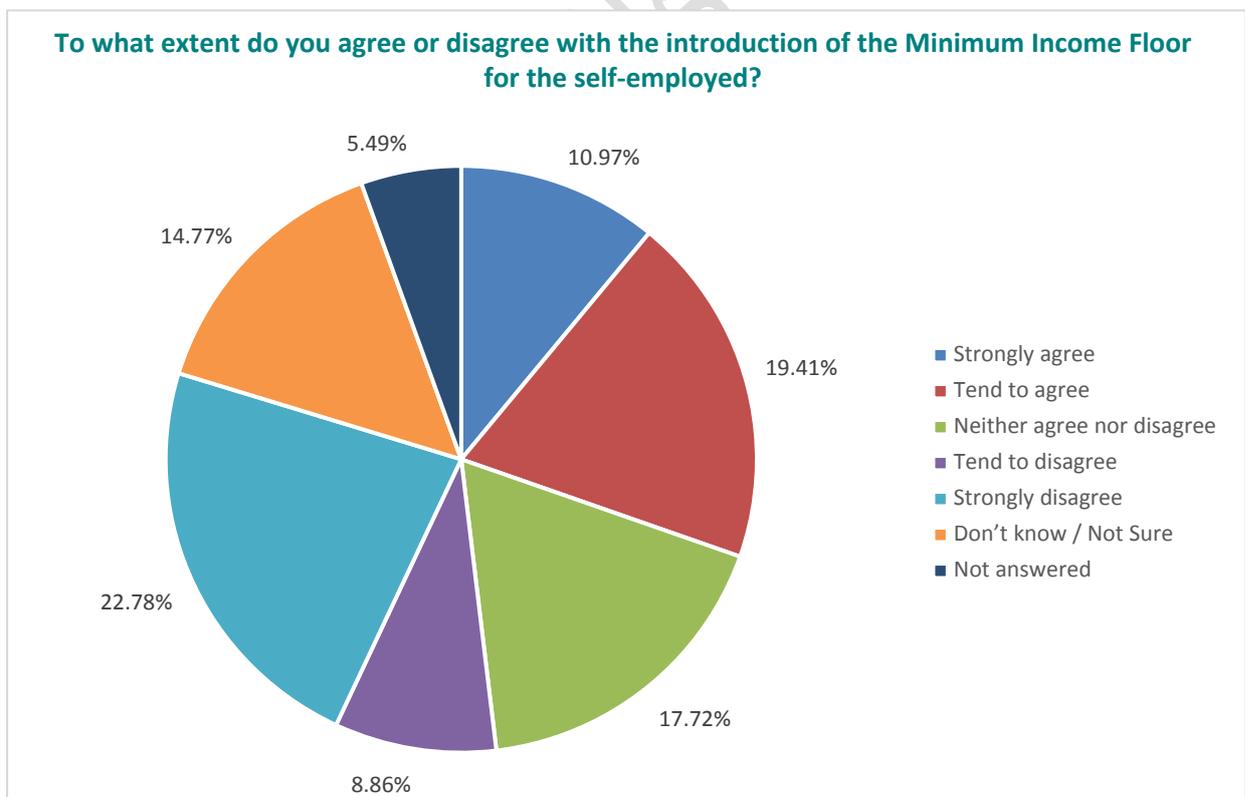


# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

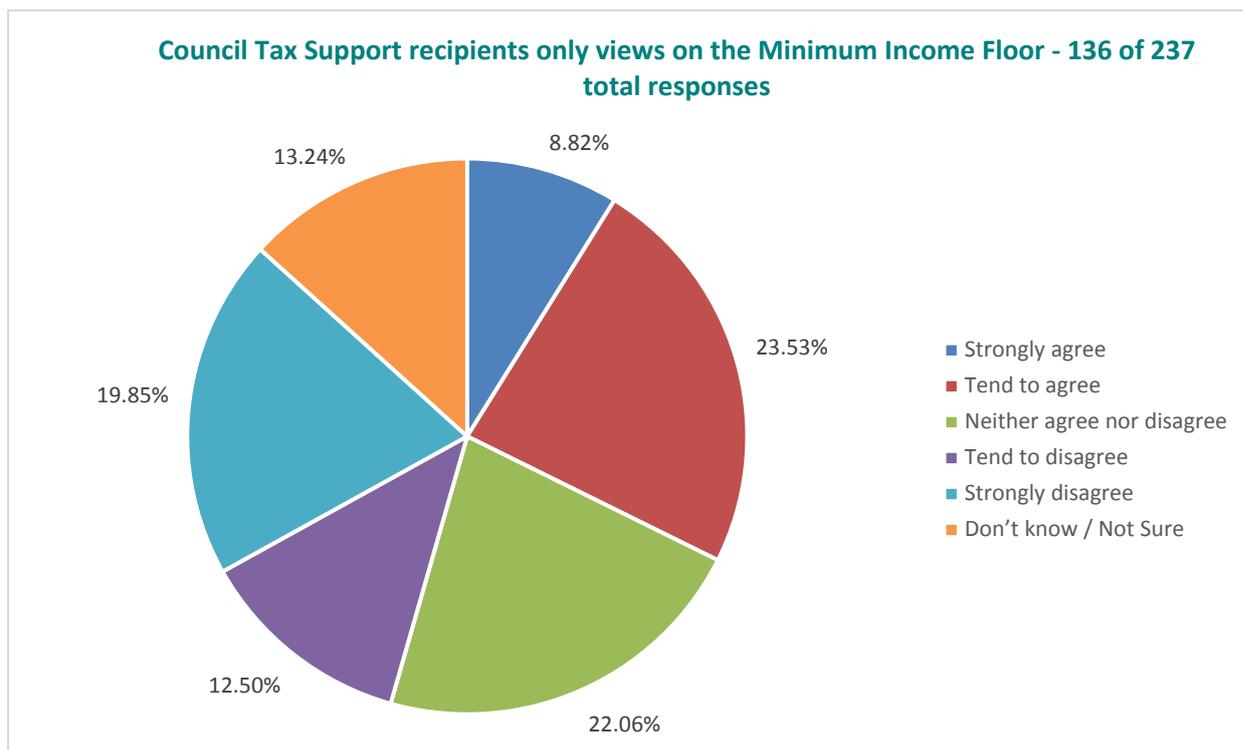
Figure 2.10: The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the aim to introduce a Minimum Income Floor for the self-employed (below)

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
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>237</b>

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



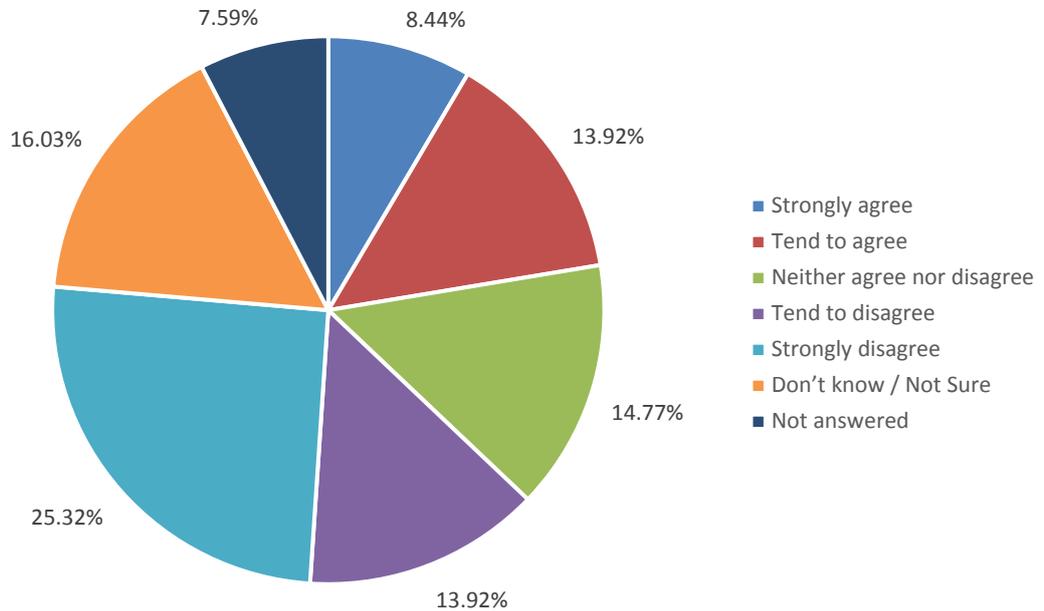
**Figure 2.12: The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the aim to no longer offset child care costs against income when calculating Council Tax Support claimants will receive (below)**

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
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>237</b>

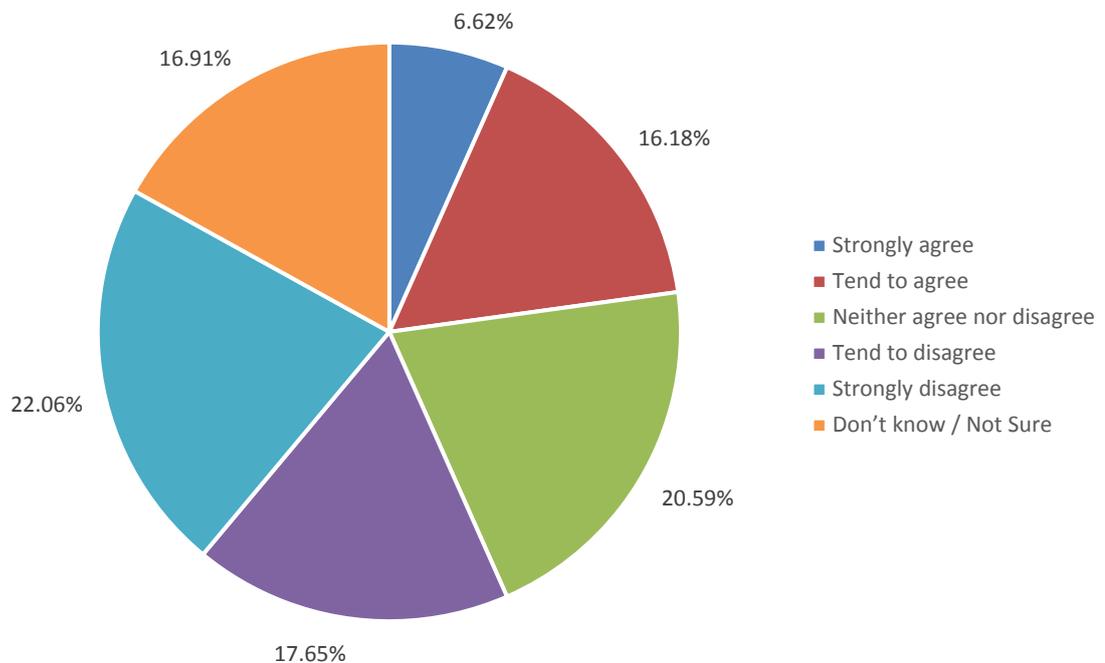
**Figure 2.13: Chart showing the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the aim to no longer offset child care costs against income when calculating Council Tax Support claimants will receive (below). Second chart depicts Council Tax Recipients only. These account for 136 of the 237 total 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 1<sup>st</sup> and the least agreed 6<sup>th</sup>. 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)**

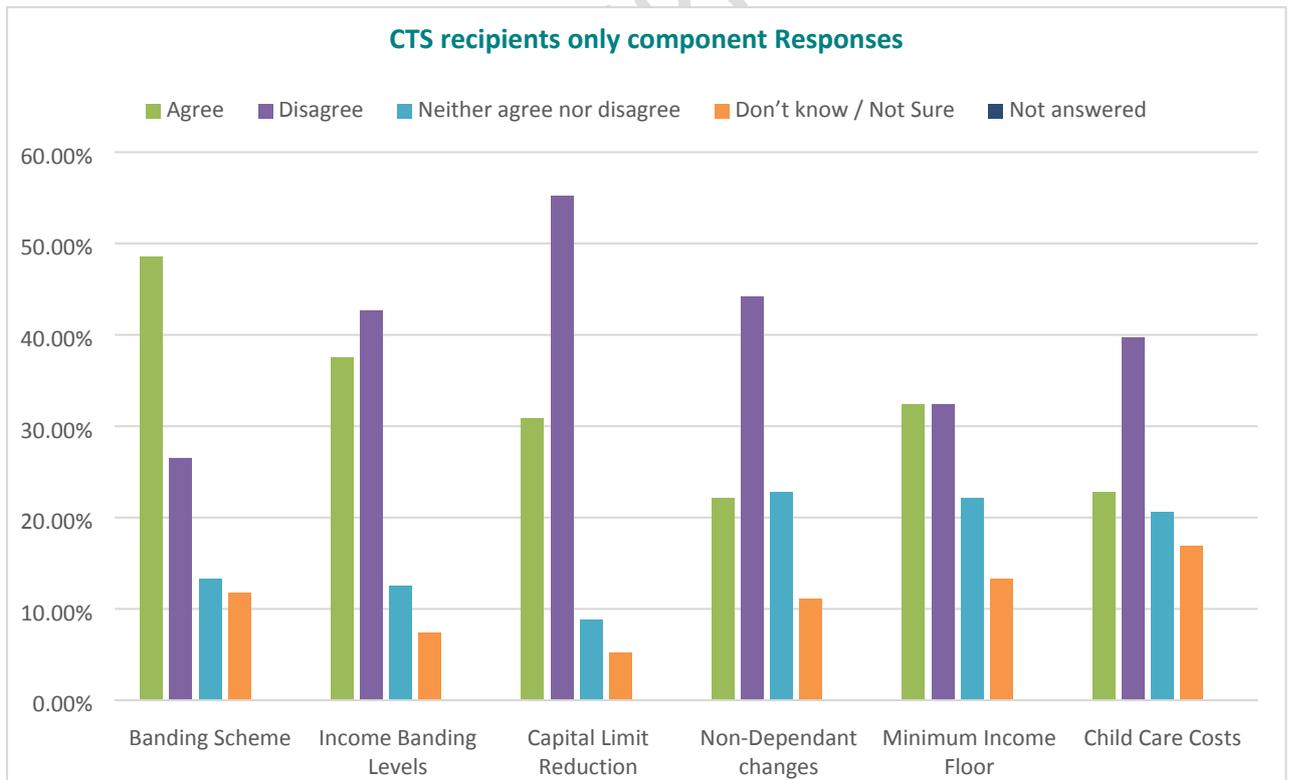
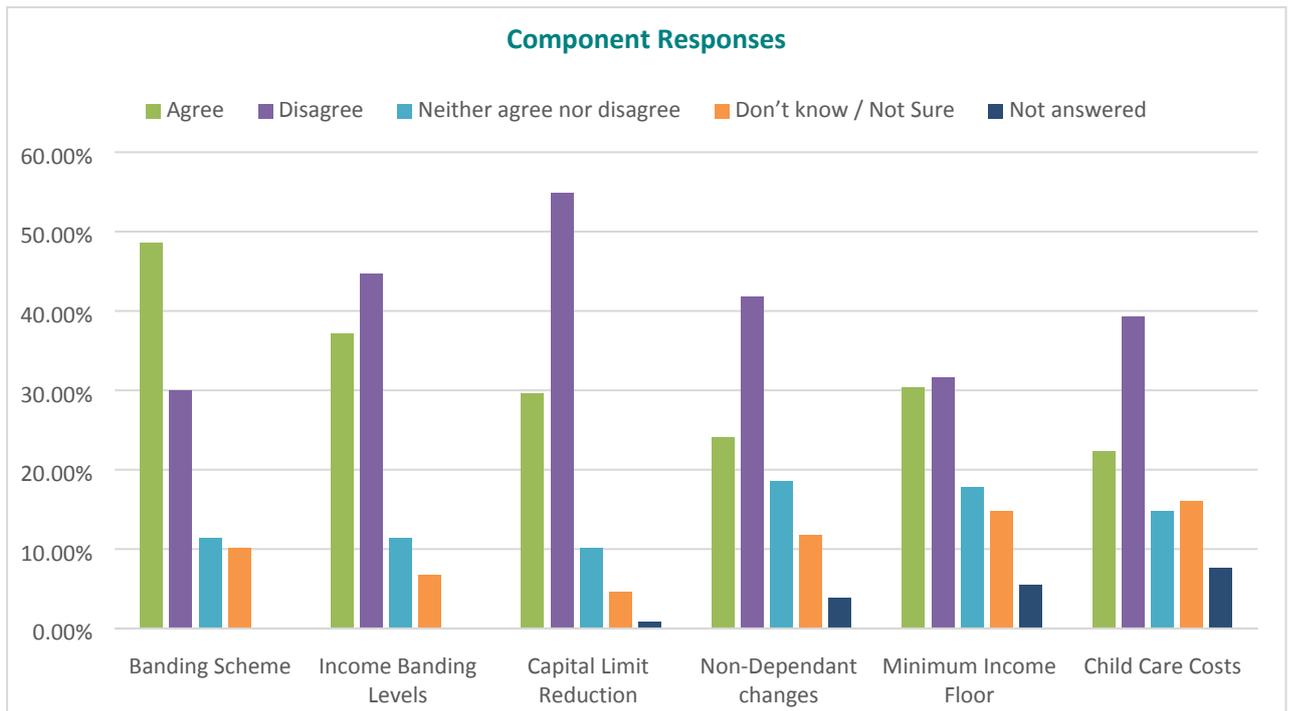
Position	Component	Strongly Agreed or Tend to Agree %
1 <sup>st</sup>	Income Banding Scheme design	48.53%
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Income Banding Scheme band amounts	37.14%
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Minimum Income Floor	30.38%
4 <sup>th</sup>	Capital Limit reduced from £16,000 to £6,000	29.54%
5 <sup>th</sup>	Simplified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

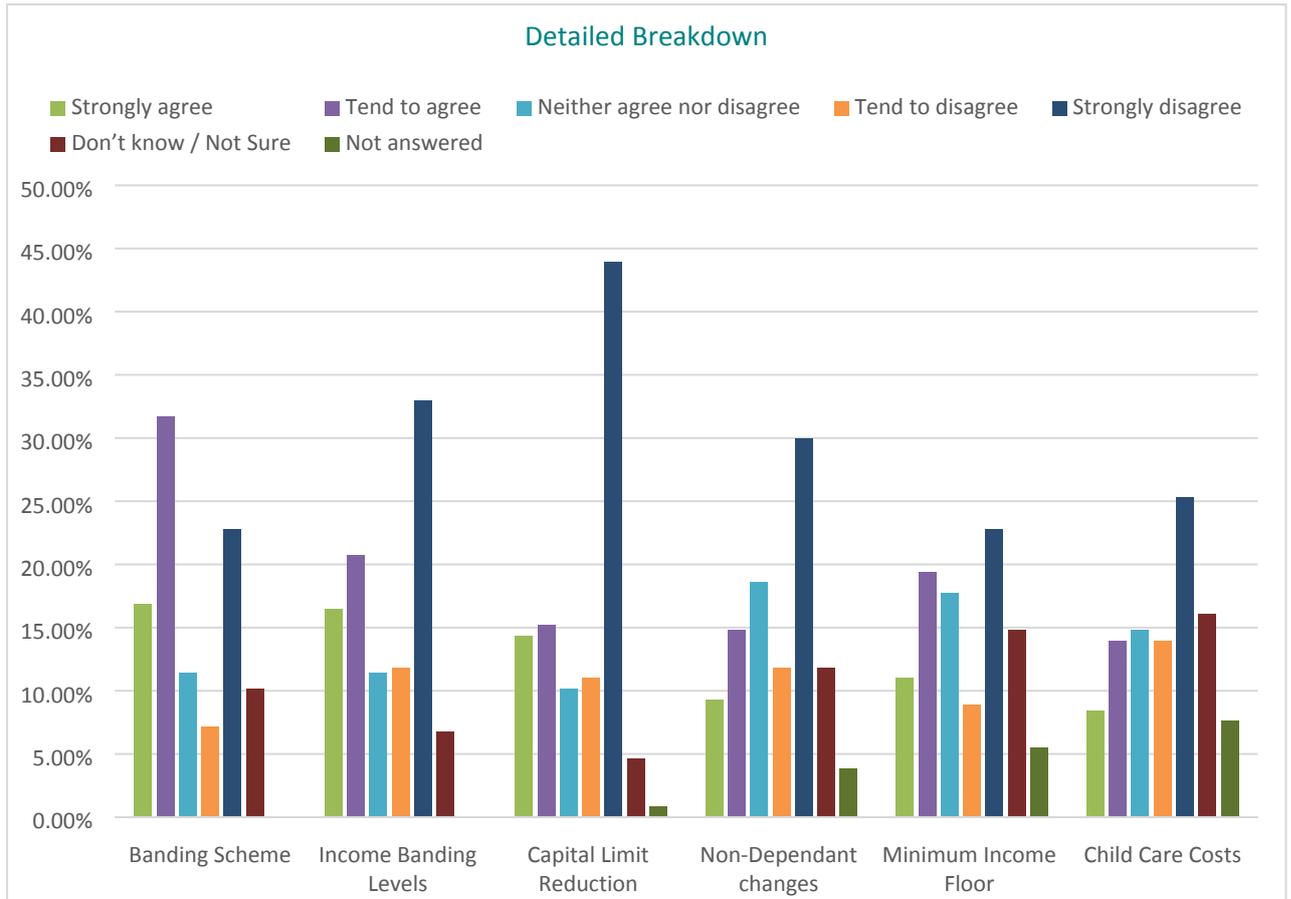
Position	Component	Strongly disagree or tend to disagree %
1 <sup>st</sup>	Capital Limit reduced from £16,000 to £6,000	54.85%
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Simplified Non-Dependant deductions	41.77%
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Removal of Childcare Disregards	39.24%
4 <sup>th</sup>	Income Banding Scheme band amounts	37.14%
5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

# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

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

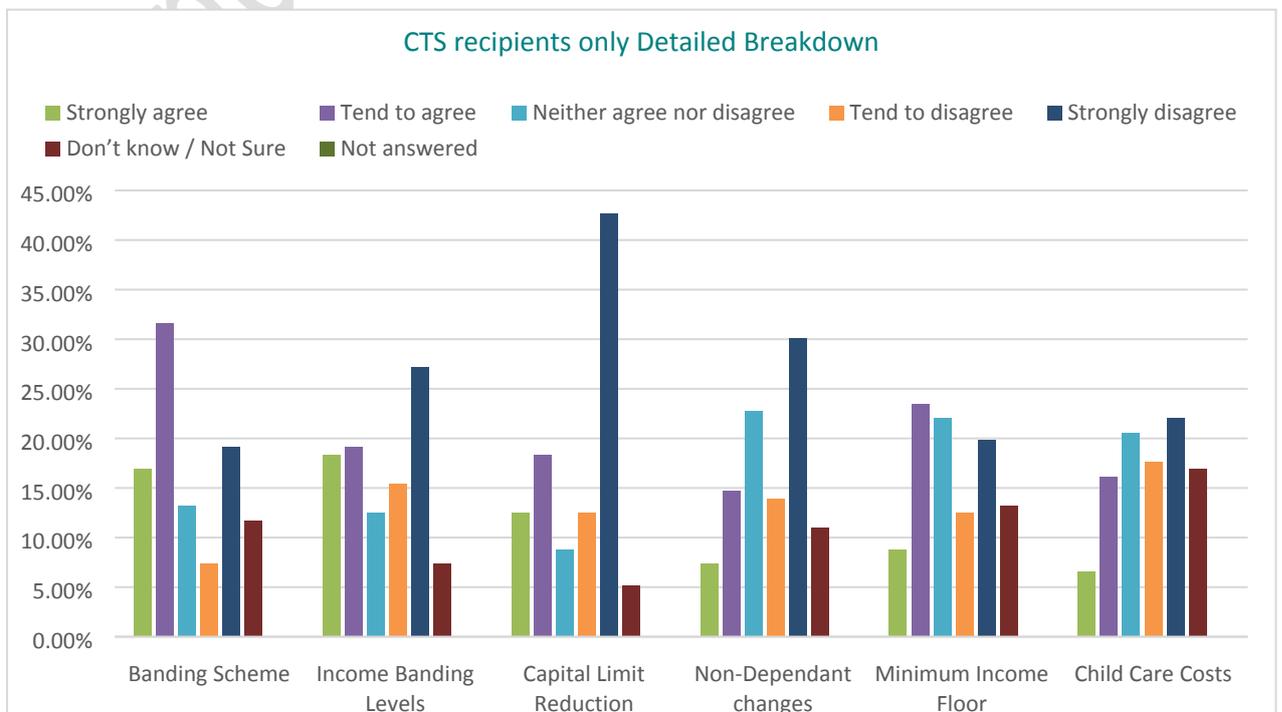


# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019



## 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.

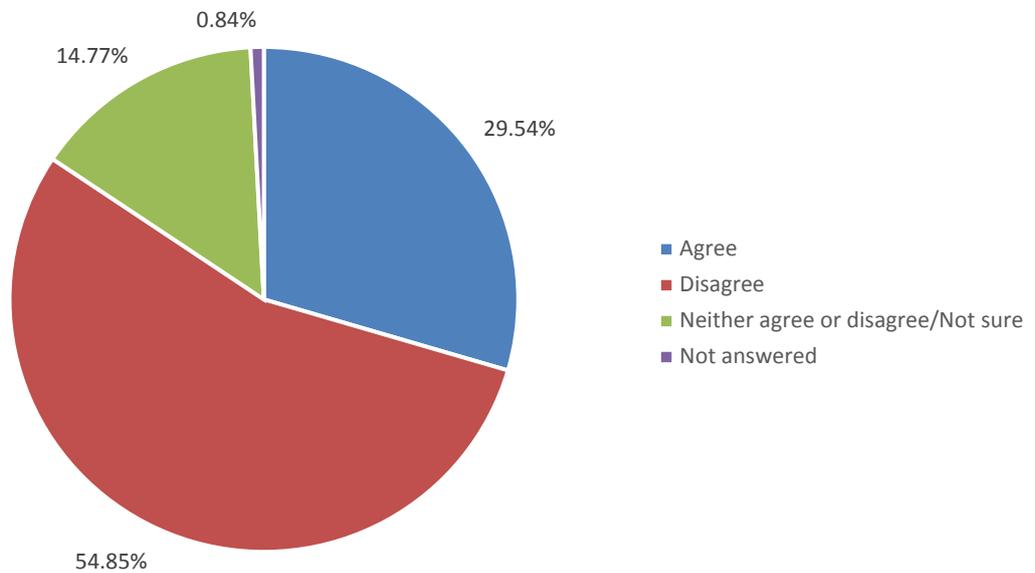
**Figure 2.19: The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the proposal to reduce the capital limit from £16,000 to £6,000 (below)**

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

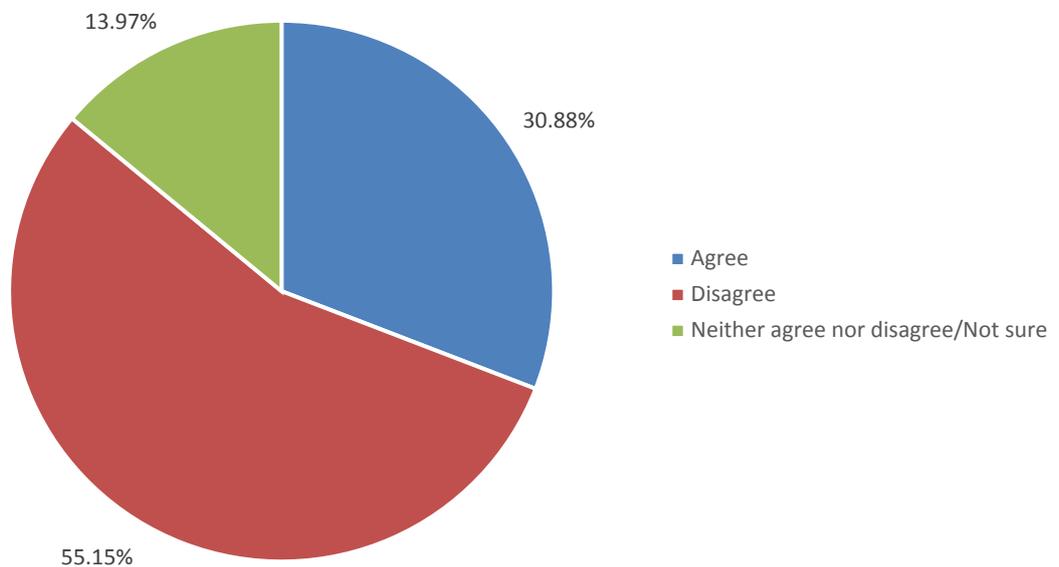
**Figure 2.20: Chart showing the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the proposal to reduce the capital limit from £16,000 to £6,000 (below)**

# 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

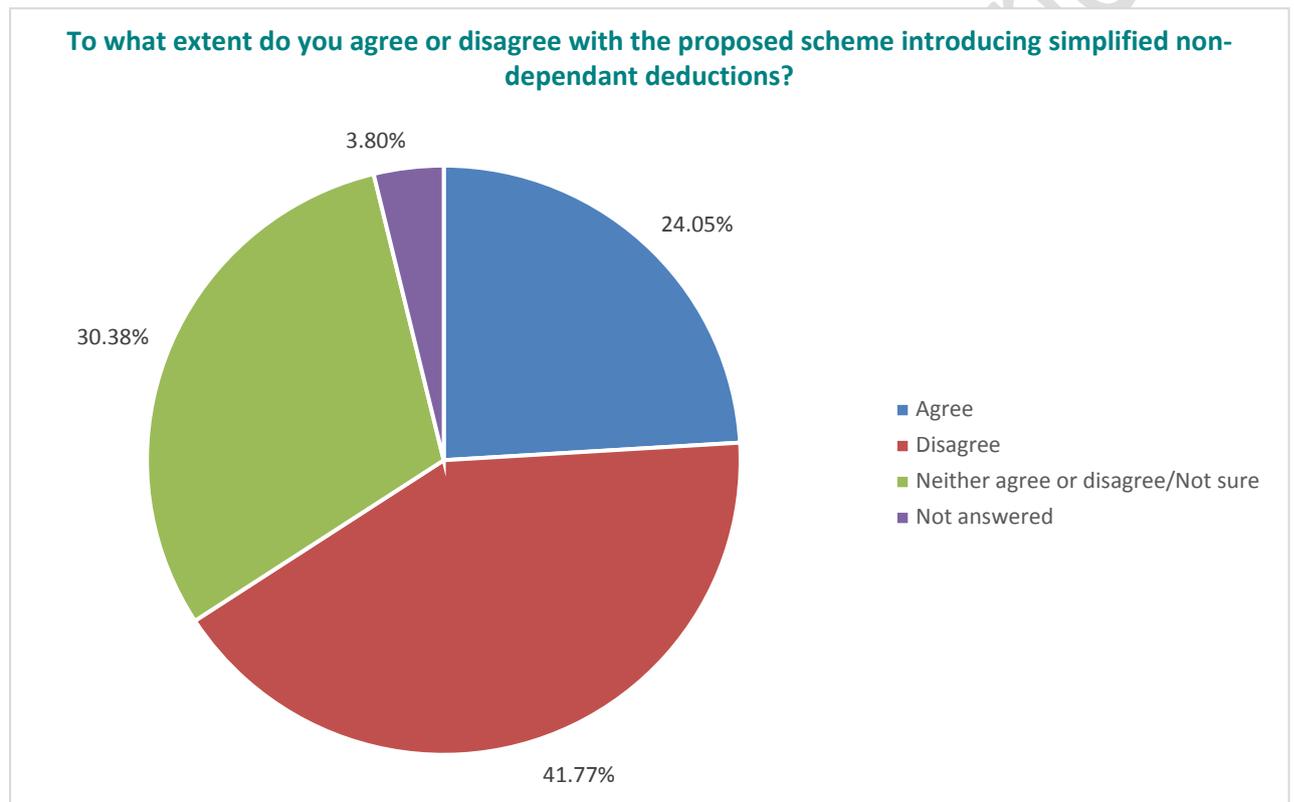


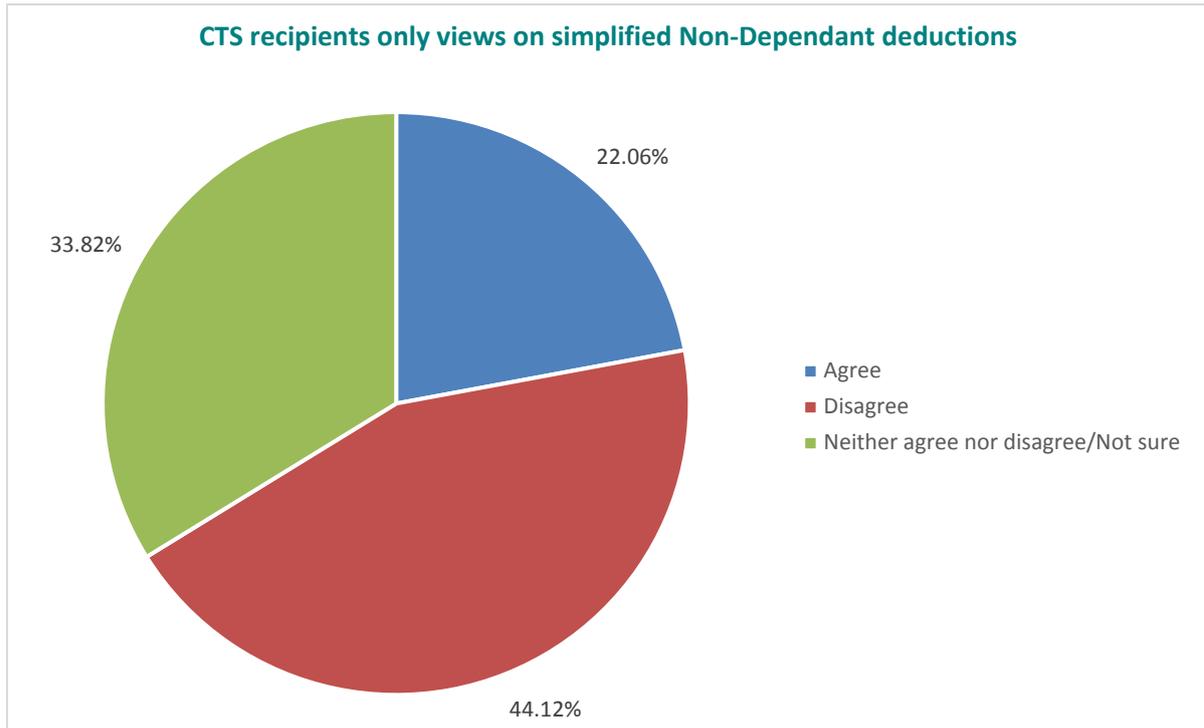
## 2.1.5 Views on Non-Dependant deductions

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)**





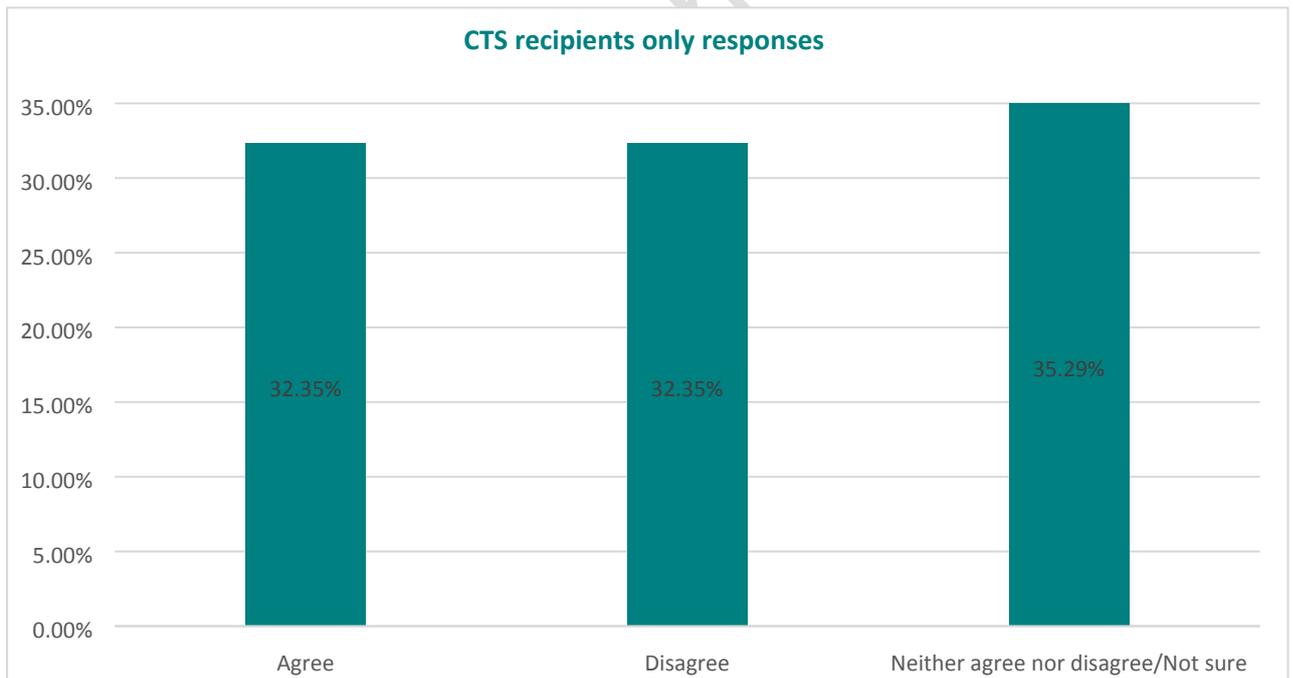
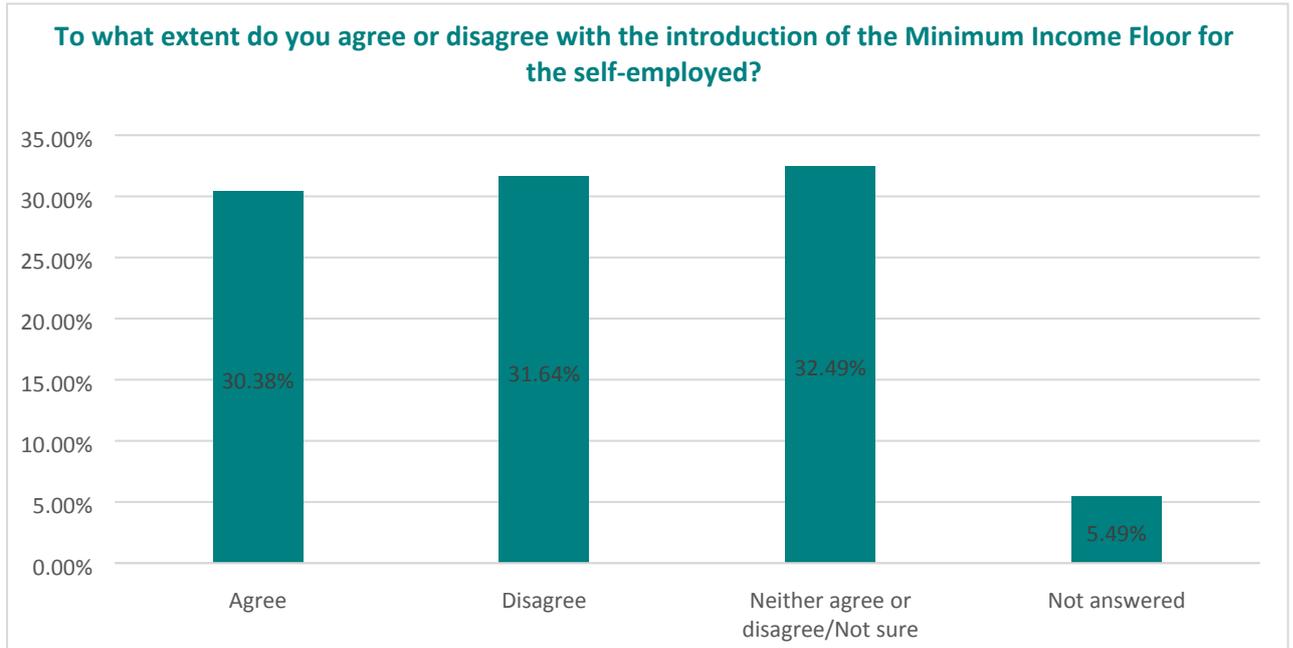
## 2.1.6 Views on the Minimum Income Floor

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



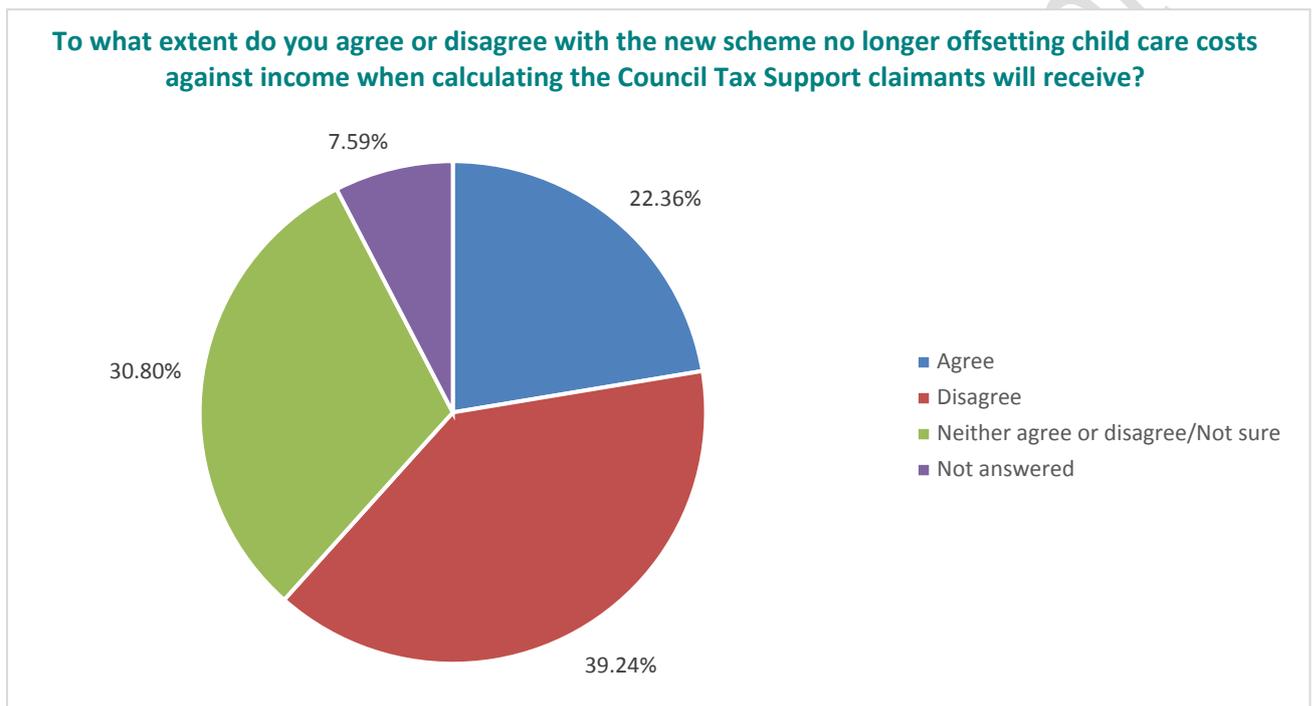
## 2.1.7 Views on Child Care Costs no longer being disregarded

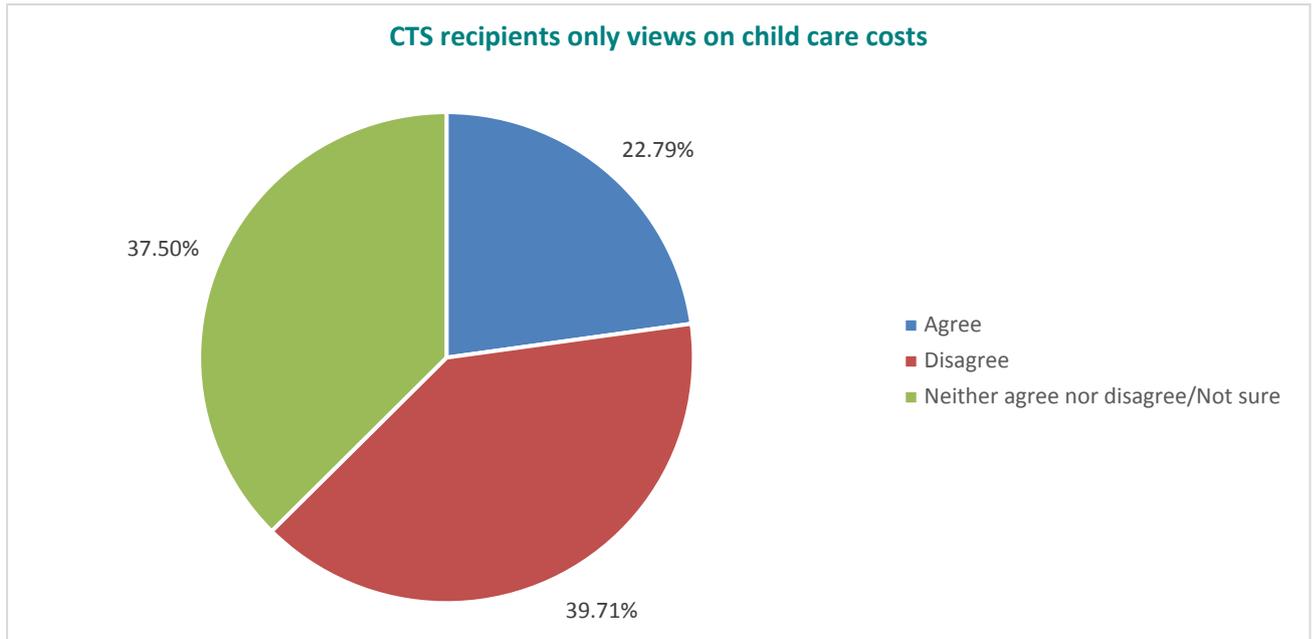
Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the removal of Child Care disregards.

# 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

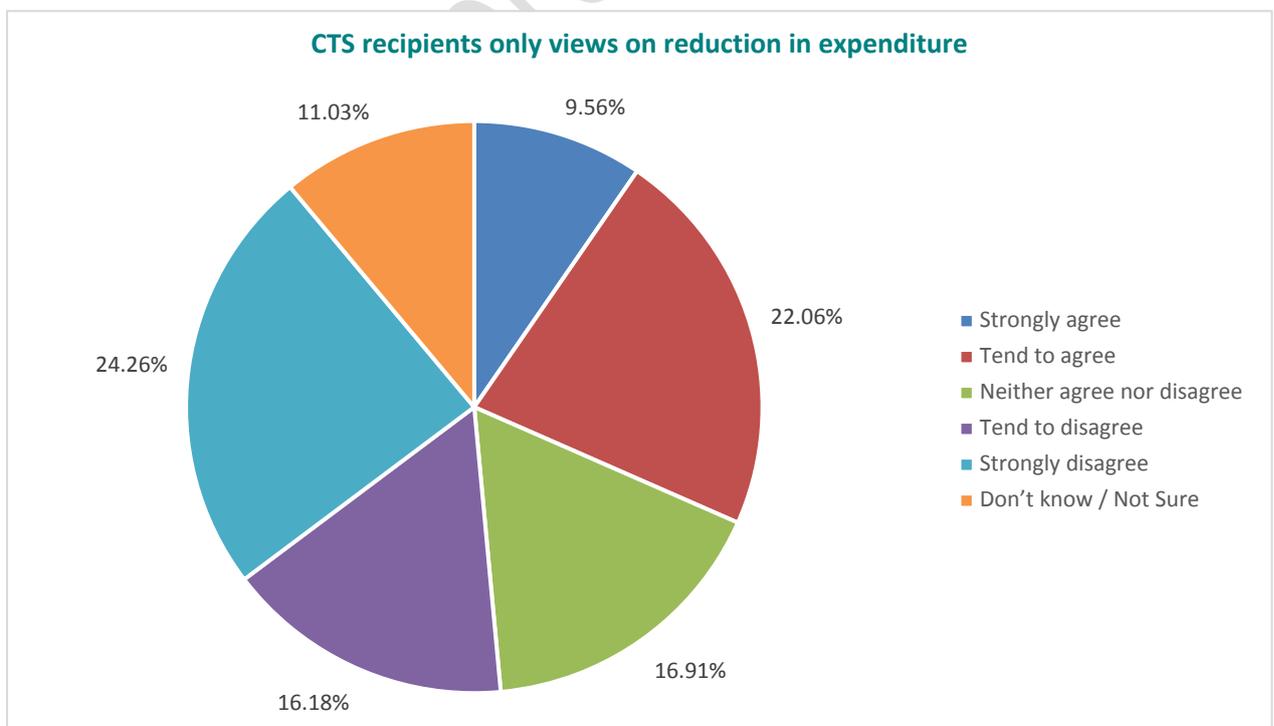
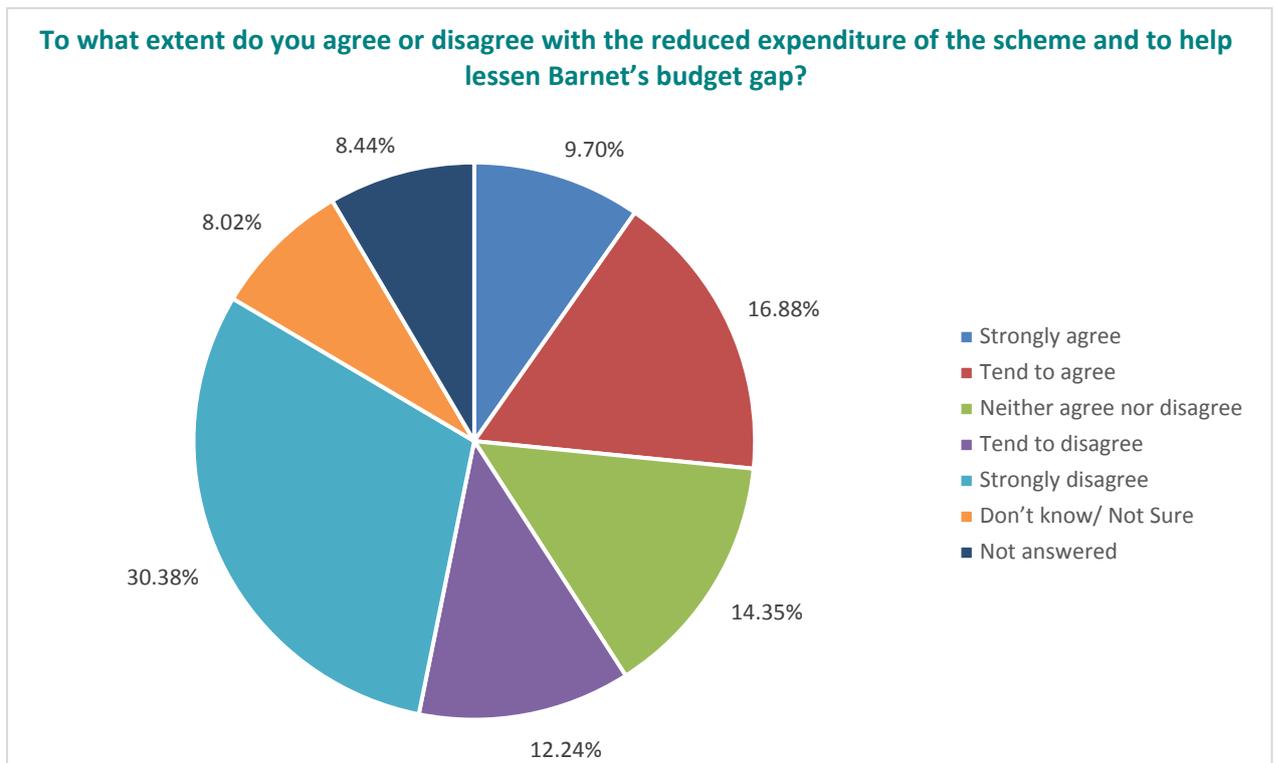
Along with the 6 key components of the scheme residents were also asked their views on other aspects on the proposed scheme.

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)



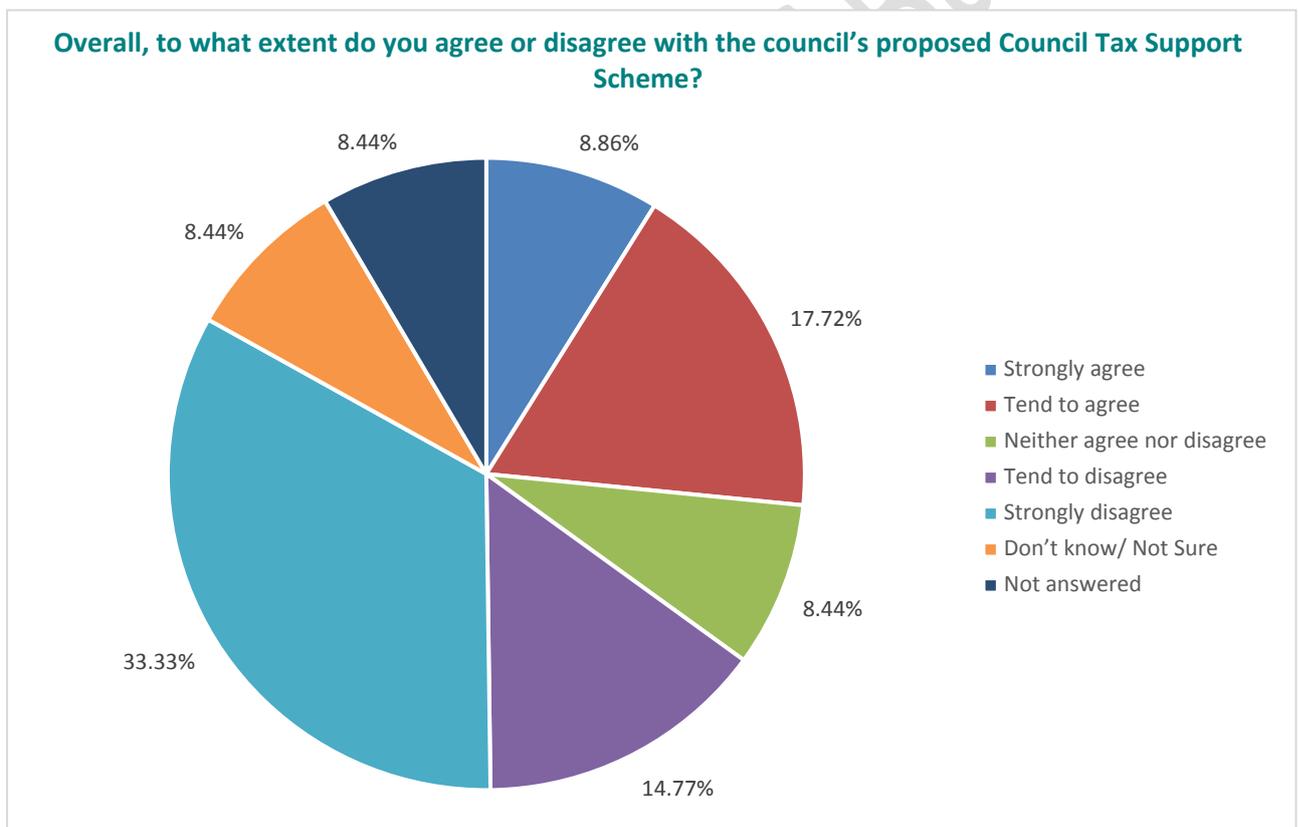
# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

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

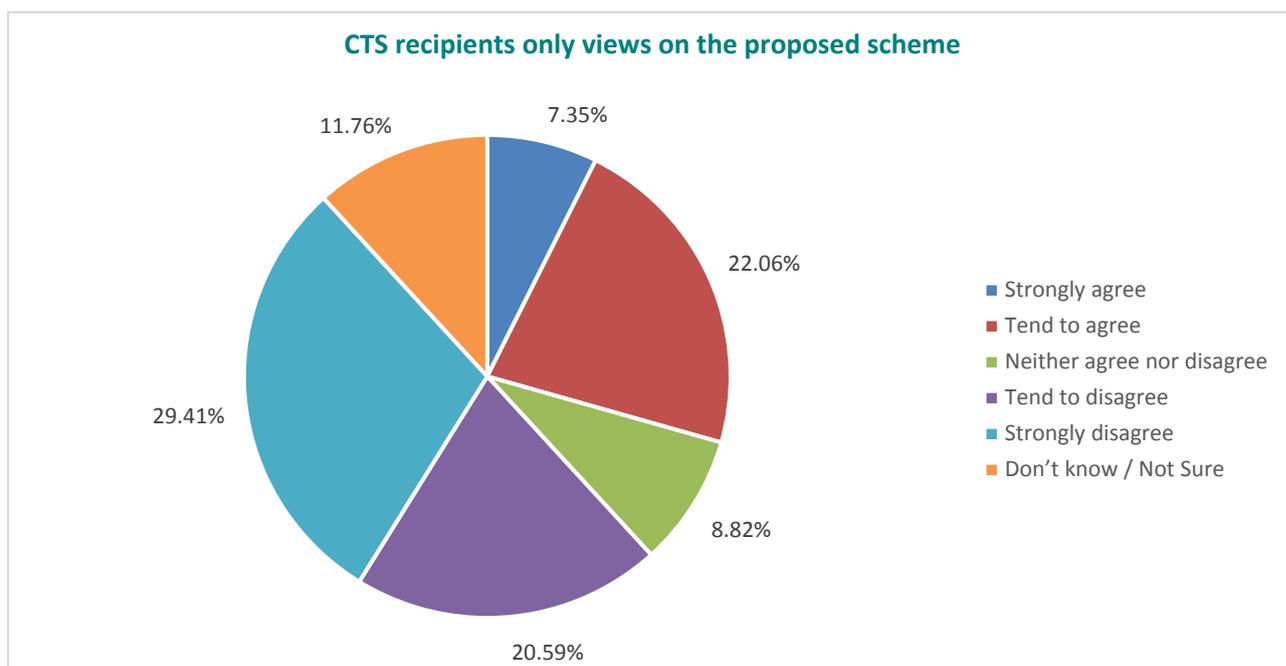
Respondents were asked if they agreed with the overall Proposed Council Tax Support scheme.

- 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
<b>Income Banding</b>	48.53%	48.53%	29.95%	26.47%
<b>Income banding levels</b>	37.14%	37.50%	44.72%	42.65%
<b>Reduction in Capital</b>	29.54%	30.88%	54.85%	55.15%
<b>Non-Dependant changes</b>	24.05%	22.06%	41.77%	44.12%

# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

<b>Minimum Income Floor</b>	30.38%	32.35%	31.64%	32.35%
<b>Child Care Costs</b>	22.36%	22.79%	39.24%	39.71%
<b>Views on reduction in expenditure</b>	26.58%	31.62%	42.62%	40.44%
<b>Overall views of the proposed scheme</b>	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.

# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

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  
17 universal credit roll out where claimants receiving less benefit- your proposed discounts will not cover  
17 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  
18 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  
19 families/residents into utter poverty, food bank use and at risk of homelessness and mental health  
19 problems. The pressure mounts up until there is an emergency situation. Stop squeezing the poor -  
19 there is no slack to take up.

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

THE DWP'S WCA IS NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE, AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE NUMBER OF  
CLAIMANTS WINNING THEIR APPEALS AT TRIBUNALS. THEIR HEALTH OFTEN DOESN'T  
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  
21 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  
22 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  
24 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  
25 100 % 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-  
26 income earners and a heavy burden for those, who mostly may be entering the job market after a  
26 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  
27 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  
29 equitable.

# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

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

# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

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!

# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

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

# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

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

90 Thi

91 people already straggle

92 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.

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

94 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

# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

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

# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

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

# Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme 2019

- 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.
  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.
- 54 Identify other areas where you can save money that don't involve disadvantaging the poorest members of our community
- 55 Fewer admin staff? Fewer managers?
- 56 I would like to suggest Barnet Council to take more council tax who are rich or wealthy millionaire!
- 57 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.
- 58 Target the rich not the poor
- 59 maybe those who are benefiting from a broken housing market should be paying more.
- 60 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,
- 61 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
- 68 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.
- 69 Kick Out Capita and stop Gainshare payments, using cash saved to ensure most needy in Barnet are treated fairly and are not pauperised
- 70 I dont have specific information to make a sensible suggestion
- 71 Increase council tax for every one
- 72 Tax the rich not cut from the poor
- 73 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.
- 74 should charge more from those who earn more, but should not effect those on lower income
- 75 The council should end all outsourcing to Capita and other private companies and bring the services back in-house.
- 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.

<b>Monthly Earnings</b>	<b>Maximum level of council tax support discount</b>
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