

## **CABINET**

**27 NOVEMBER 2012**

### **LOCALISING SUPPORT FOR COUNCIL TAX**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Alan Jarrett, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance

Report from: Mick Hayward, Chief Finance Officer

Author: Jon Poulson, Revenues & Benefits Manager

#### **Summary**

This report details the outcome of the consultation for the delivery of a local Council Tax Support scheme with effect from 1 April 2013 and seeks Members' approval to draw up a scheme.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1 It is the Cabinet's responsibility to propose a budget to be agreed by Council. The introduction of a localised Council Tax Support scheme (CTS) will have an impact on both the taxbase calculation and the budget requirement that underpin the budget proposal. The consequences of dealing with these issues will directly impact on the level of council tax.
- 1.2 Following the consultation process this report requests officers to draw up a local council tax support scheme which will be presented to Cabinet on 18 December 2012 for consideration and referral to Council.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 As part of the Spending Review 2010 the Government made a policy commitment to localise support for council tax by 2013/14 accompanied by a declared intention to reduce expenditure by 10%.
- 2.2 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 (WRA2012), which received royal assent on 8 March 2012, abolishes both Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) and will be brought into force by means of commencement orders to be made by the Secretary of State. Housing costs will eventually be met through Universal Credit (UC), which will be administered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and phased in between October 2013 and March 2017. A local council tax support (CTS) scheme administered by local authorities will replace CTB from 1 April 2013.
- 2.3 The Local Government Finance Act 2012 (LGFA2012), which received royal assent on 31 October 2012 establishes a framework for localised CTS. It states that each billing authority in England must make a CTS scheme by no later than 31 January 2013, and

the first financial year to which that scheme relates must be the year beginning with 1 April 2013. It also states that each billing authority must undertake public consultation on the content of its proposed scheme.

- 2.4 The Cabinet agreed on the contents of the consultation on 4 September 2012 (147/2012) and the eight week period for which that consultation should last (148/2012).
- 2.5 On 18 October 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) announced that an additional £100m will be made available for one year to support local authorities in developing council tax support schemes that comply with criteria set by Government to ensure that low income households do not face an extensive increase in their council tax liability in 2013-14.

### **3. Consultation on the Council Tax Support Scheme**

- 3.1 Consultation took place from 10 September 2012 to 4 November 2012 on both the preferred scheme (attached at Appendix A) and other additional options (attached at Appendix B).
- 3.2 In total 557 survey questionnaires were completed either by phone, on paper or the web and a further 92 letters from individuals and 2 from organisations responding to the survey were received.
- 3.3 A copy of the survey questionnaire is at Appendix C and a detailed breakdown of the survey results is contained at Appendix D which can be summarised as follows:

#### *3.3.1 Do you agree or disagree with the basic principles used for Medway's preferred scheme?*

In all the various categories the number of respondents who strongly agreed/ agreed outnumbered those who disagreed/strongly disagreed

#### *3.3.2 We propose that working-age people who receive a war widow or war disablement pension should be protected from the proposed changes to the scheme. Do you agree or disagree with the above statement?*

Strong agreement across all groups

#### *3.3.3 Do you agree or disagree that all working-age people should pay part of their council tax bill?*

Overall those who agreed (46.3%) outnumbered those who disagreed (36.1%). However, there was a clear difference of opinion between those who were working or retired who mainly agreed and those who were not working or were unemployed who mainly disagreed. Similarly those who were paying council tax or did not receive benefits were more likely to agree whilst those not paying council tax or were in receipt of benefits were more likely to disagree.

#### *3.3.4 What percentage do you feel people of working age, who claim support, should pay?*

Overall the majority felt people should pay 25%, but again there was a clear division between those in benefit and those not in benefit, with the majority of those in benefit supporting a 20% charge. Over a third of respondents did not express a preference.

3.3.5 *Do you agree that where other people live in the household, the claimant should pay more towards their council tax?*

Overall those who agreed (50.3%) outnumbered those who disagreed (28.7%). This was similar across most groups with the exception of the unemployed of whom 39% agreed and 46% disagreed.

3.3.6 *Do you think the second adult rebate scheme should be stopped?*

This was agreed across all groups.

3.3.7 *Do you agree that council tax support should be restricted where people live in more expensive property?*

This was agreed across all groups

3.3.8 *Do you agree with the increase in taper to 25%*

This was agreed across all groups albeit by only a narrow margin amongst the unemployed (41% agreed, 39% disagreed).

3.4 The correspondence received from individuals contains personal data and so is not attached but is available for Members' consideration and a breakdown is at Appendix E which can be summarised as follows:

3.4.1 20 agreed with the basic principles (17 from pension age respondents, 3 unknown)

3.4.2 9 disagreed with the basic principles (4 pension age, 3 working age, 2 unknown)

3.4.3 11 expressed concern of the effects on the disabled and carers (9 working age, 1 pension age, 1 unknown)

3.4.4 9 varying comments on charging were received (5 pension age, 4 unknown)

3.4.5 43 general comments ranging from a lack of interest, pay freezes for staff, VAT should be passed to councils to use for benefits to requests for personal illustrations of the effects the scheme will have.

3.5 The correspondence received from the 2 organisations, the Kent Autistic Trust and MHS, is at Appendix F.

#### **4. Transitional Grant**

4.1 On 18 October 2012 the DCLG announced that an additional £100m will be made available for one year to support local authorities in developing council tax support schemes.

4.2 In order to qualify for the grant billing authorities must adopt schemes which ensure that:

- Those who would be entitled to 100% support under current council tax benefit arrangements pay between zero and no more than 8.5% of their net council tax liability;

- The taper rate does not increase above 25%;
- There is no sharp reduction in support for those entering work;
- The taper should continue to operate as under current council tax benefit regulations - that is, to be applied to excess income and in relation to the claimant's maximum eligible council tax reduction. Where an authority has decided to adopt a scheme in which the maximum reduction is lower than 100% of liability, this maximum eligible reduction will therefore be this level, lower than 100% of liability.

4.3 Acceptance of the transitional grant would cost the Council a net £1.4 million as set out at paragraph 7.7.

## 5. Advice and Analysis

5.1 There are a number of options that have been identified and considered as part of the process of developing a CTS scheme and this report sets out the results of consultation on some of those different options and elements that could be considered as part of a proposed / possible CTS scheme that would meet the potential funding shortfall.

5.2 When considering making changes to policies, the decision maker needs to comply with its obligations as to equalities under the Equality Act 2010. In essence this requires decision makers to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Protected characteristics, as defined in the 2010 Act, are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Having due regard to the above needs involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

In order to comply with its equality duties, the Council is required to engage with service users, representative groups, staff and unions and to use the information and views gathered as a result of such engagement (together with other equality information the local authority has) in assessing the equality impact of the proposals

5.3 In order to meet these obligations an equality questionnaire was included within the consultation survey to identify any particular concerns raised by individual groups. A full diversity impact assessment will be completed having regard to this information and will be submitted with the proposed scheme to Cabinet on 18 December.

## 6. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Failure to produce a scheme	Likelihood D (Low) Impact 2 (Critical) If a scheme is not in place the Council will be obliged to use the default scheme (continuation of existing CTB scheme).	Project/Implementation plan drawn up with milestones
Forecast cost of scheme falls short	Likelihood D (Low) Impact 3 (Marginal) Claimants may have reduced benefits ‘unnecessarily’	Use of data modelling tools and data analysis
Forecast cost of scheme excessive	Likelihood D (Low) Impact 2 (Critical)	Use of data modelling tools and data analysis
Effect on collection	Likelihood B (High) Impact 2 (Critical) Dependant on method of funding, but new scheme likely to produce small debts and debtors who have not had to pay before	Quick and efficient recovery processes
Comparison to neighbouring authorities	Likelihood D (Low) Impact 2 (Critical) If the Medway scheme is markedly more generous than surrounding authorities’ schemes there is a possibility of claimants migrating into Medway placing additional stress on funding	Maintain links to other local authorities

## 7. Financial and legal implications

- 7.1 The legal implications are set out in the body of the report.
- 7.2 The Government issued a consultation document in May on the funding of the new scheme. To secure the reduction in subsidised expenditure, funding for council tax support from 2013 will no longer be met from Annually Managed Expenditure but will be met through an upfront allocation for all billing and major precepting authorities. This will be 90 per cent of the forecast subsidised council tax benefit expenditure for 2013/14. Figures marked ‘for illustrative purposes only’ in the same document suggested Medway Council would receive £14.185m. Major preceptors (Kent Police Authority (KPA) and Kent & Medway Fire and Rescue Authority (KFRS)) will receive a proportionate grant directly.
- 7.3 The Government has still not announced the actual funding billing authorities will receive, and as such the illustrative figure of £14.185m previously announced remains the only figure to base calculations upon. However, this figure was based on a 2.9% increase in council tax levels and was in place prior to the announcement of a further council tax freeze grant proposal. It is therefore likely that this figure will be reduced based on an

assumption that there should be no increase in council tax for 2013/14. If this were to be the case the grant could reduce by £412,000 to £13.773m.

- 7.4 Since the scheme was put out to consultation the Government has set the limit by which council tax can rise without a public referendum at 2%. The cost of the current benefit scheme based on a 2% increase in council tax levels would be £19.8m of which Medway's element would be £16.7m leaving a shortfall of £3.0m against the previous estimate of £4m.
- 7.5 The preferred scheme would reduce Medway's proportion of expenditure by £2.7m leaving a further £0.3m to be achieved to meet the reduction in funding.
- 7.6 Changes to Class C exemptions could increase revenue by £0.7m giving a total of £0.4m to cover a likely reduction in collection rates and any additional collection costs. This will not be sufficient to cover these since a potential 50% collection rate would reduce the revenue of £2.7m and £0.7m by £1.7m although provision for this will not need to be made until 2014/15 when potential write-offs will begin.
- 7.7 If Medway Council was to accept the transitional grant and a cap on the benefit reduction of 8.5%, income from the grant would increase by £0.4m and expenditure would increase by £1.8m leaving a shortfall of £1.4m, prior to allowances for a loss in collection, compared to the preferred scheme.
- 7.8 If Medway Council chose the option to reduce benefit by 20% rather than 25%, expenditure would increase by £0.5m leaving a shortfall of £0.1m, prior to allowances for a loss in collection, compared to the preferred scheme.

## **8 Recommendations**

- 8.1 That Members request officers to draw up a local council tax support scheme based upon the preferred scheme which was subject to consultation and report this back to Cabinet on 18 December 2012.

## **9 Suggested reasons for decisions**

- 9.1 The majority of respondents to the consultation were in agreement with the principles of the scheme.
- 9.2 The scheme balances the need for supporting those currently in receipt of council tax benefit and the ability of the Council to fund the scheme within the current budgetary constraints.

## **Lead officer contact**

Jon Poulson, Revenues & Benefits Manager, Gun Wharf, ext 3700  
Email [jon.poulson@medway.gov.uk](mailto:jon.poulson@medway.gov.uk)

## **Background papers**

Letter dated 5 April 2012 from CLG to Chief Finance Officers  
Returned questionnaires  
Returned correspondence

## APPENDIX A

### Local Council Tax Support – Preferred Scheme

Change to Existing CTB Scheme	Reduction in Expenditure*	Case No's	Average Weekly Cost
<p><b>Reduce the liability used to assess Council Tax Support by 25%</b></p> <p>Currently council tax benefit is assessed taking into account 100% of a resident's council tax liability.</p>	<b>£3,200,000</b>	<b>14329</b>	<b>£4.29</b>
<p><b>Extend the minimum deduction in respect of non-dependants to include any such person in the household, aged 18 years or more, who is in receipt of a means tested benefit.</b></p> <p>Currently no deduction applies where a non-dependant receives Job Seekers Allowance (income based), Employment Support Allowance (income related) or similar means tested benefits. Deductions do apply where the non-dependant is working or in receipt of benefit based on national insurance contributions.</p>	<b>£123,000</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>£2.26</b>
<p><b>Remove Second Adult Rebate</b></p> <p>Residents can currently claim Second Adult Rebate based on the income of any other adult in the property to compensate them for the loss of 25% Single Person Discount. Currently if a customer claims council tax benefit but would be better off if they receive a second adult rebate this is awarded automatically.</p>	<b>£19,000</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>£1.35</b>
<b>Total Reduction in Expenditure</b>	<b>£3,342,000*</b>		

\* Please note savings are cumulative, with each subsequent saving being dependent on the preceding one.

## Local Council Tax Support – Additional Options

### 1.1 As per preferred scheme with added elements:

Change to Existing CTB Scheme	Reduction in Expenditure*	Case No's	Average Weekly Cost
<p><b>Reduce the liability used to assess Council Tax Support by 25%</b></p> <p>As per preferred scheme.</p>	<b>£3,200,000</b>	<b>14329</b>	<b>£4.29</b>
<p><b>Extend the minimum deduction in respect of non-dependants to include any such person in the household, aged 18 years or more, who is in receipt of a means tested benefit.</b></p> <p>As per preferred scheme.</p>	<b>£123,000</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>£2.26</b>
<p><b>Remove Second Adult Rebate</b></p> <p>As per preferred scheme.</p>	<b>£19,000</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>£1.35</b>
<p><b>Cap maximum payments at Band C</b></p> <p>This means that all claims would be worked out using a maximum liability of Band C (£1,178.47).</p>	<b>£150,000</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>£3.26</b>
<p><b>Increase taper from 20% to 25%</b></p> <p>Where income is higher than a person's needs allowance currently 20% of the excess should be used to meet council tax liability. The calculation will be increased to 25% of the excess</p>	<b>£120,000</b>	<b>2400</b>	<b>£0.96</b>
<b>Total Reduction in Expenditure</b>	<b>£3,612,000*</b>		

\* Please note savings are cumulative, with each subsequent saving being dependent on the preceding one.



## Local Council Tax Support – Additional Options

### 1.2 As per preferred scheme but increasing liability used to 80% with added elements:

Change to Existing CTB Scheme	Reduction in Expenditure*	Case No's	Average Weekly Cost
<p><b>Reduce the liability used to assess Council Tax Support by 20%</b></p> <p>As per preferred scheme.</p>	<b>£2,588,000</b>	<b>14329</b>	<b>£3.47</b>
<p><b>Extend the minimum deduction in respect of non-dependants to include any such person in the household, aged 18 years or more, who is in receipt of a means tested benefit.</b></p> <p>As per preferred scheme.</p>	<b>£125,000</b>	<b>1047</b>	<b>£2.30</b>
<p><b>Remove Second Adult Rebate</b></p> <p>As per preferred scheme.</p>	<b>£17,000</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>£1.21</b>
<p><b>Cap maximum payments at Band C</b></p> <p>This means that all claims would be worked out using a maximum liability of Band C (£1,178.47).</p>	<b>£162,000</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>£3.52</b>
<p><b>Increase taper from 20% to 25%</b></p> <p>Where income is higher than a person's needs allowance currently 20% of the excess should be used to meet council tax liability. The calculation will be increased to 25% of the excess</p>	<b>£134,000</b>	<b>2400</b>	<b>£1.07</b>
<b>Total Reduction in Expenditure</b>	<b>£3,062,000*</b>		

\* Please note savings are cumulative, with each subsequent saving being dependent on the preceding one.

**Local Council Tax Support – Survey Questionnaire**

## Consultation on new localised scheme for council tax benefit

From April 2013, if you are of working age and claim council tax benefit the amount of support you receive may be changing.

The government is reducing the amount of money available to fund council tax benefit and asking local councils to run their own schemes. So, even if you have not paid council tax previously you may have to start paying from 1 April 2013.

Medway Council's draft proposal for council tax support is shown below. We have set out the basic principles of the proposed scheme and provided details of additional options which may also be considered.

### Firstly:

#### 1. Are you:

- Male
- Female

#### 2. Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?

- Yes (if yes, which organisation)   
.....
- No

#### 3. Do you currently pay council tax to Medway Council?

- Yes
- No

#### 4. Are you currently in receipt of Council Tax Benefit?

- Yes
- No

#### 5. Do you own a second home in Medway?

- Yes
- No

We do need to make some choices around the reductions that we are required to make. So, please tell us your views on the proposals set out below.

### The Basic Principles:

The proposed scheme will match its administrative process as closely as possible to the current council tax benefit scheme. We would use our existing systems to receive and process claims – keeping any implementation costs for the new scheme as low as possible and avoiding the requirement for existing claimants to make new applications for support.

By replicating much of the existing scheme we would still be able to assist the most vulnerable members of the community.

We would also aim to incentivise people to return to work, by maintaining the extended four-week benefit period for customers who have been out of work for longer than 26 weeks and in receipt of a relevant qualifying benefit.

#### 6. Do you agree or disagree with the basic principles used for Medway's preferred scheme?

- Strongly agree
- Agree

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

7. We propose that working-age people who receive a war widow or war disablement pension should be protected from the proposed changes to the scheme.

**Do you agree or disagree that people who receive a war widow or war disablement pension should be protected from these changes?**

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know

**8. Do you agree or disagree that all working-age people should pay part of their council tax bill?**

- Agree (go to question 9)
- Disagree (go to question 10)
- Don't know (go to question 9)

9. The proposed scheme will limit council tax support so that all working age people who claim support will have to pay something towards their council tax.

Based on current council tax this means a family in a Band C property could pay an extra £4.53 a week if we limited support by 20 per cent or £5.66 a week towards their council tax if we limited support by 25 per cent. However, if they have another adult in the property (for example a relative lives with them) they could pay more. If the decision is made for the scheme to limit support by 20 per cent, as opposed to 25 per cent, the remaining required funds will be collected from increased charges to taxpayers or reductions in service.

**What percentage do you feel people of working-age, who claim support, should pay?**

- 20%
- 25%
- Don't know

10. Currently people pay more because they have a grown up child or adult living with them, although there are some exceptions to this. The proposed scheme will extend this to all grown up children or adults, with some exceptions (for example students and apprentices).

**Do you agree that where other people live in the household, the claimant should pay more towards their council tax?**

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know

11. Currently some people with higher income or savings are not entitled to, or receive less, help with their benefit. However, the second adult rebate means that if they share their home with someone who is not their partner and who has a low income they may receive a rebate of up to 25 per cent off their council tax bill. We propose that this second adult rebate, payable to working-age customers, ends.

**Do you think the second adult rebate scheme should be stopped?**

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know

**Additional options we would like you to consider, which may be incorporated into the chosen scheme:**

12. The amount of council tax payable depends on the council tax band for a property. This option suggests that anyone who claims council tax support and lives in a higher banded property will be limited to receiving the same amount of council tax benefit as if they were living in a Band C property.

**Do you agree that council tax support should be restricted where people live in more expensive property?**

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know

13. **Currently**, where a claimant's income is higher than their benefits allowances their council tax benefit entitlement is reduced, by 20 per cent of the excess income.

The option suggests increasing this reduction to 25 per cent. This means that for every £10 a week excess income a claimant receives they will have to pay an additional 50 pence a week towards the council tax.

**Do you agree with the increase to 25 per cent?**

- Agree
- Disagree
- Don't know

Medway is committed to consulting with all its residents and so to ensure that all groups within the community have the opportunity to participate in this consultation we would appreciate if you would provide us with the following personal information. The information provided will remain private and confidential and will not be used for any purpose other than to ensure that everybody has the opportunity to have their views and opinions heard. You are under no obligation to provide the following information and it will not affect your input if you choose not to.

**14. In which of the following age bands do you fall?**

- Under 18
- 18 – 64
- 65 or over
- prefer not to say

**What is your ethnic group?**

**White**

- British
- Irish
- Any other White background

**Multi-ethnic**

- Mixed White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed White and Black African
- Mixed White and Asian
- Any other mixed background

**Asian or Asian British**

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi

- Chinese
- Any other Asian background
- Black or Black British**
- Black Caribbean
- Black African
- Any other Black background
- Other**
- Other ethnic group
- Prefer not to say

**15. Do you have any long-term illness, health problem or disability, which limits your daily activity or the work you can do?**

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

**16. Which of the following most accurately describes your current situation?**

- Working
- Unemployed
- Retired
- Not working   
(disabled, looking after the house/children, carer)
- Student
- Prefer not to say

**17. What is your postcode**

.....

Please return the completed survey to:

Medway Council  
Business Support Department  
Gun Wharf  
Dock Road  
Chatham  
ME4 4TR

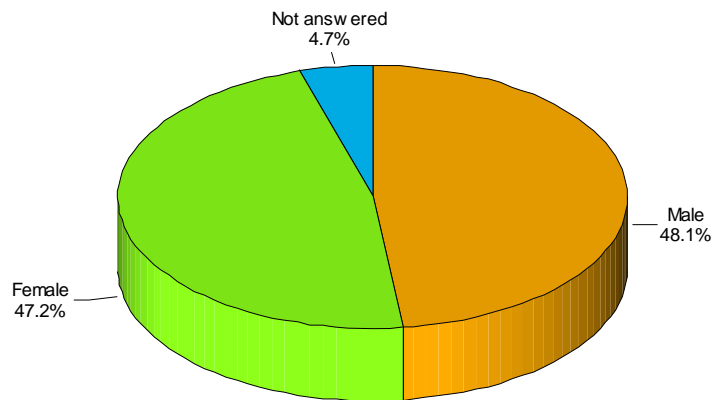
For more information on the changes to council tax benefit please visit:

**[www.medway.gov.uk/ctssurvey](http://www.medway.gov.uk/ctssurvey)**

## APPENDIX D

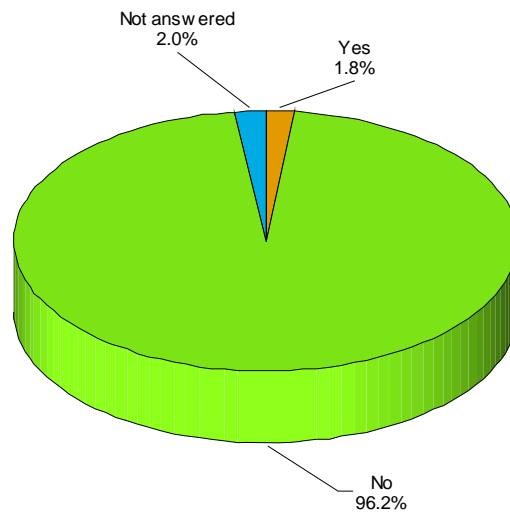
### Local Council Tax Support – Consultation Response

Question 1.      Are you:



There were no marked differences by those paying/not paying council tax to Medway Council, those in receipt of Council Tax Benefit, age, disability, current situation or area.

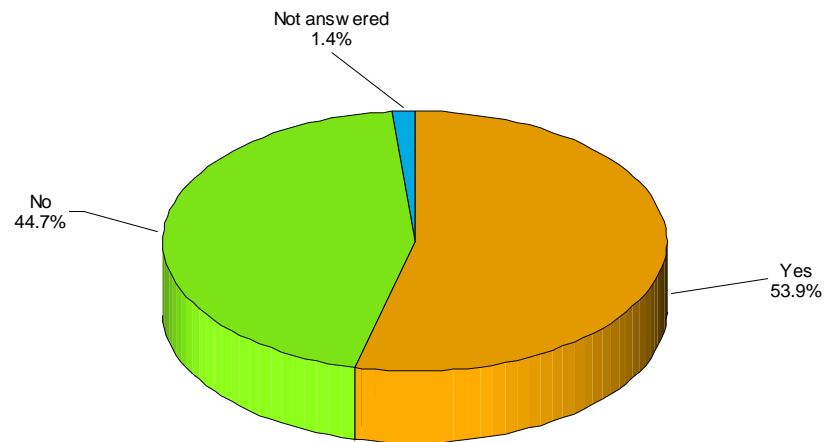
Q2. Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?



Due to the very small sample size it was not possible to perform any cross tabulations on this data.



Q3. Do you currently pay council tax?



Those currently in receipt of Council Tax Benefit were less likely to currently pay council tax (43% of those in receipt of Council Tax Benefit compared to 87% of those that did not receive Council Tax Benefit).

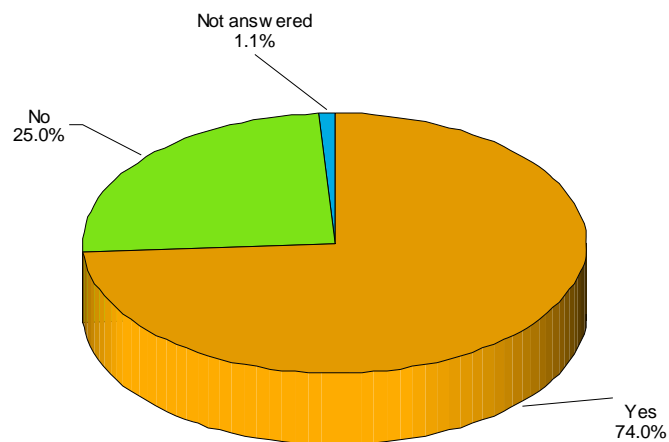
Those with a disability were less likely to pay council tax (45% of those with a disability compared to 64% of those without a disability).

Working respondents were more likely to pay council tax (86% compared to 54% of the group as a whole); whereas unemployed respondents and respondents that were not working (disabled, looking after the home/children, carer) were less likely to pay council tax (22% and 39% respectively compared to 54% of the group as a whole).

Those living in Strood were more likely to currently pay council tax (68% compared to 54% of the group as a whole).

There were no marked differences by gender or age.

Q4. Are you currently in receipt of Council Tax Benefit?



Those not currently paying council tax to Medway Council were almost a third more likely to be in receipt of Council Tax Benefits (92% of those not paying council tax compared to 60% of those paying council tax to Medway Council).

Those aged 65 or over were more likely to receive Council Tax Benefit (83%) than the group overall (74%).

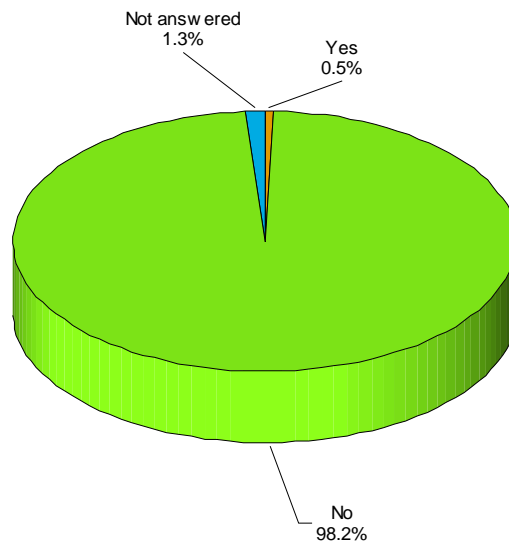
Those with a disability were more likely to be in receipt of Council Tax Benefit (91% of those with a disability compared to 58% of those without a disability).

Working respondents were less likely to be in receipt of Council Tax Benefit (36% compared to 74% of the group as a whole); whereas unemployed respondents and those not working (disabled, looking after the home/children, carer) were more likely to be in receipt of Council Tax Benefit (89% and 93% respectively compared to 74% of the group as a whole).

Those living in Rochester were less likely to be in receipt of Council Tax Benefit (64%) compared to the group as a whole (74%).

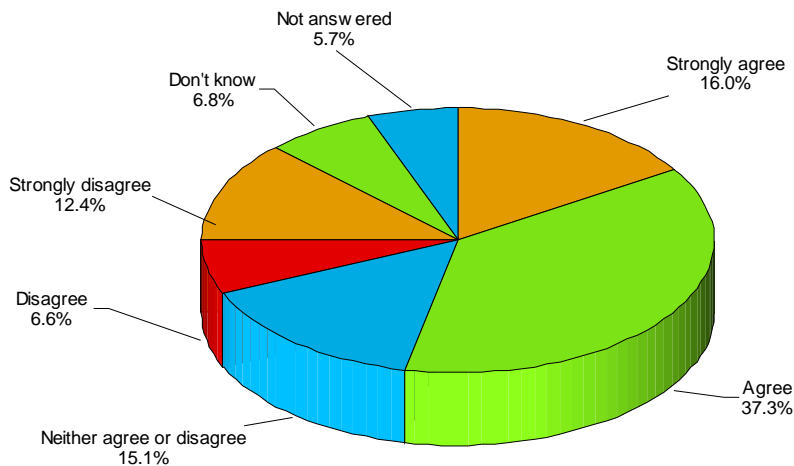
There were no marked differences by gender.

Q5. Do you own a second home in Medway?



Due to the very small sample size it was not possible to perform any cross tabulation with this data.

**Q6. Do you agree or disagree with the basic principles used for Medway's preferred scheme?**



Those currently paying council tax were more likely to agree/strongly agree (63% of those paying council tax compared to 43% of those not paying council tax); with those not paying council tax more likely to disagree/strongly disagree with the basic principles used for Medway's preferred scheme (25% of those not paying council tax compared to 15% of those paying council tax).

Those currently in receipt of Council Tax Benefit were less likely to agree/strongly agree with the basic principles (50%) compared to those that do not receive Council Tax Benefit (64%).

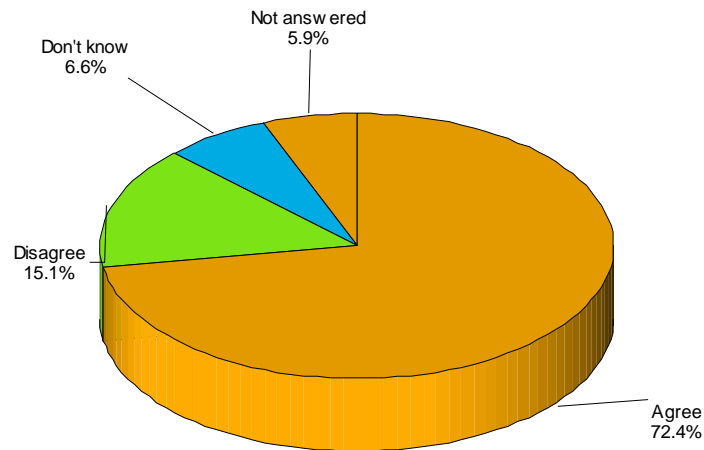
Those aged 65 or over were more likely to agree with the basic principles (75% compared to 53% of the group overall).

Working and retired respondents were more likely to agree/strongly agree with the basic principles (66% and 73% respectively compared to 53% of the group overall); whereas those not working (disabled, looking after home/children, carer) were less likely to agree/strongly agree (39% compared to 53% of the group overall) and more likely to disagree/strongly disagree (30% compared to 19% of the group overall). Unemployed respondents were also more likely to disagree/strongly disagree (30% compared to 19% of the group overall).

Those that completed the paper survey were more likely to agree/strongly agree with the basic principles (63% compared to 53% of the group as a whole).

There were no marked differences by gender, disability or area.

Q7. We propose that working-age people who receive a war widow or war disablement pension should be protected from the proposed changes to the scheme. Do you agree or disagree with the above statement:

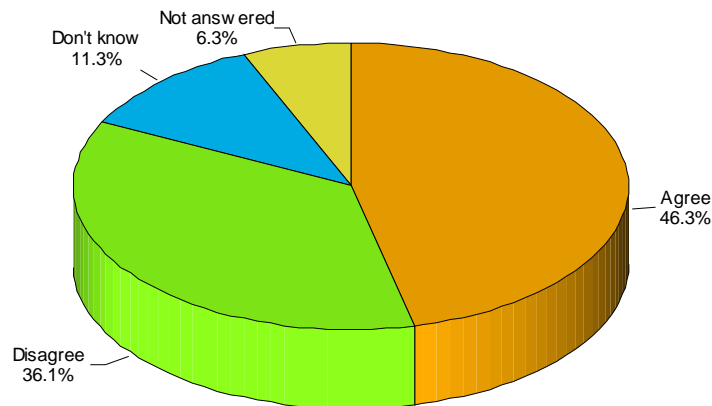


Those aged 65 or over were more likely to agree that working-age people who receive a war widow or war disablement pension should be protected from the proposed changes to the scheme (83% compared to 72% of the group overall).

Those living in Strood were more likely to agree (82%) compared to the group as a whole (72%).

There were no marked differences by those paying/not paying council tax, those in receipt/not receiving Council Tax Benefit, gender, disability or current situation.

**Q8. Do you agree or disagree that all working-age people should pay part of their council tax bill?**



Those currently paying council tax were twice as likely to agree that all working-age people should pay part of their council tax bill (61% of those paying council tax compared to 29% of those not paying council tax); with those not paying council tax almost twice as likely to disagree (49% of those not paying council tax compared to 25% of those paying council tax).

Those in receipt of Council Tax Benefit were less likely to agree (41% of those in receipt of Council Tax Benefit compared to 63% of those not receiving Council Tax Benefit) and more likely to disagree (40% of those in receipt of Council Tax Benefit compared to 25% of those not receiving this benefit) or answer 'don't know' to this question (14% of those in receipt of Council Tax Benefit compared to just 4% of those not receiving Council Tax Benefit).

Those aged 65 or over were more likely to agree (82% compared to 46% of the group as a whole) and less likely to disagree (8% compared to 36% of the group overall); whereas those aged 18-64 were more likely to disagree (50% compared to 36% of the group as a whole).

Those with a disability were less likely to agree (42%) compared to those without a disability (57%).

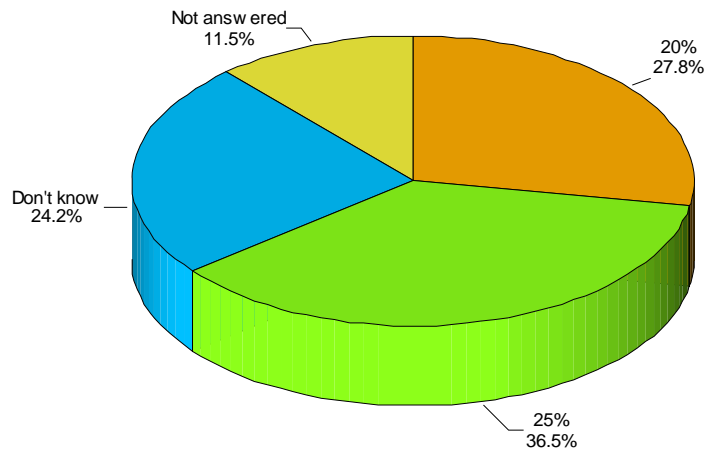
Working and retired respondents were more likely to agree (65% and 82% respectively compared to 46% of the group as a whole) and less likely to disagree (26% and 9% respectively compared to 36% of the group as a whole); whereas unemployed respondents and those not working (disabled, looking after the home/children, carer) were less likely to agree (19% and 21% respectively compared to 46% of the group as a whole) and more likely to disagree (59% and 66% respectively compared to 36% of the group as a whole).

Those living in Strood were more likely to agree (59% compared to 46% of the group as a whole); whilst those living in Chatham were more likely to disagree (52% compared to 36% of the group as a whole).

Those completing a paper survey were more likely to agree (56% compared to 46% of the group overall) and less likely to disagree (24% compared to 36% of the group overall).

There were no marked differences by gender.

Q9. What percentage do you feel people of working age, who claim support, should pay?



Those currently paying council tax were more than twice as likely to cite 25% (46% of those paying council tax compared to 21% of those not paying council tax); whereas those not currently paying council tax were more likely to answer 'don't know' to this question (34% of those not paying council tax compared to 19% of those paying council tax).

Those in receipt of Council Tax Benefit were less likely to cite 25% (28% of those in receipt of Council Tax Benefit compared to 58% of those not receiving Council Benefit Tax) and more likely to cite 20% (32% of those in receipt of Council Tax Benefit compared to 17% of those not receiving Council Tax Benefit) or answer 'don't know' to this question (29% of those in receipt of Council Tax Benefit compared to 14% of those not receiving Council Tax Benefit).

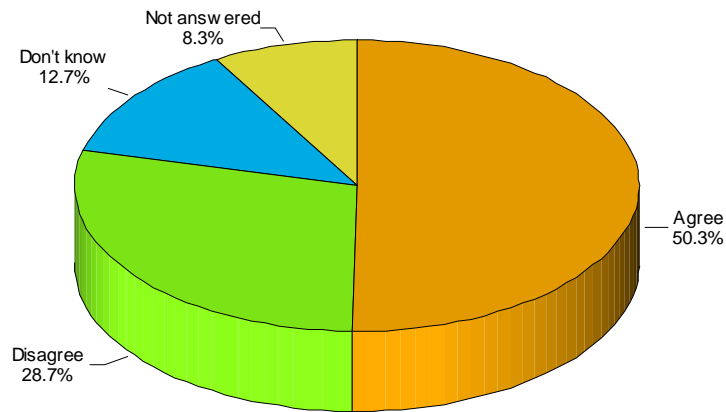
Females were more likely to state that people of working age, who claim support, should pay 25% (42% of females compared to 33% of males); whereas males were more likely to answer 'don't know' to this question (29% of males compared to 19% of females).

Those without a disability were more likely to cite 25% (51% of those without a disability compared to 31% of those with a disability); whereas those with a disability were more likely to answer 'don't know' (36% of those with a disability compared to 17% of those without a disability).

Those living in rural areas of Medway were more likely to cite 20% (39% compared to 28% of the group overall); whereas those living in Rochester and Strood were more likely to cite 25% (47% and 54% respectively compared to 37% of the group overall). However those living in Gillingham were more likely to answer 'don't know' to this question (34%), whilst those living in Strood were less likely to answer 'don't know' to this question (14% compared to 24% of the group overall).

There were no differences by age or current situation.

**Q10. Do you agree that where other people live in the household, the claimant should pay more towards their council tax?**



Those currently paying council tax were more likely to agree that where other people live in the household, the claimant should pay more towards their council tax (56% of those paying council tax compared to 44% of those not paying council tax).

Males were more likely to agree (59% of males compared to 44% of females); whereas females were more likely to answer 'don't know' or give no response to this question.

Those aged 65 or over were more likely to agree (63% compared to 50% of the group as a whole) and less likely to disagree (15% compared to 29% of the group as a whole).

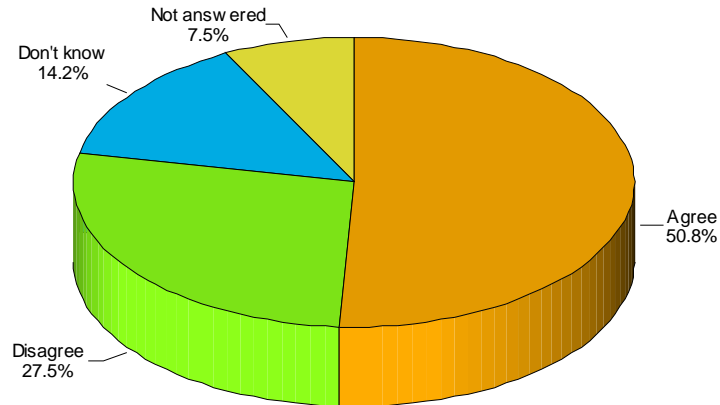
Unemployed respondents were less likely to agree that where other people live in the household, the claimant should pay more towards their council tax (39% compared to 50% overall) and more likely to disagree (46% compared to 29% of the group overall); whereas retired respondents were more likely to agree (65% compared to 50% of the group overall) and less likely to disagree (17% compared to 29% of the group overall). Working respondents were also more likely to agree (62% compared to 50% of the group overall).

Those living in Rochester and rural areas of Medway were more likely to agree that where other people live in the household, the claimant should pay more towards their council tax (62% and 65% respectively compared to 50% of the group as a whole).

There were no marked differences by those in receipt/not receiving Council Tax Benefit or disability.



Q11. Do you think the second adult rebate scheme should be stopped?



Males were more likely to agree that the second adult rebate scheme should be stopped (56%) compared to females (47%).

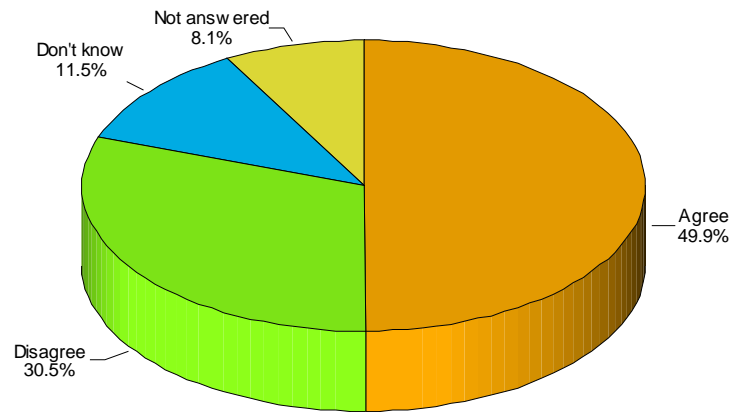
Those aged 65 or over were more likely to agree that the scheme should be stopped (69% compared to 51% of the group as a whole) and half as likely to disagree (14% compared to 28% of the group as a whole).

Retired respondents were more likely to agree (67% compared to 51% of the group as a whole) and less likely to disagree (17% compared to 28% of the group as a whole).

Those living in Rochester, Strood and rural areas of Medway were also more likely to agree that the second adult rebate scheme should be stopped (62%, 62% and 65% respectively) compared to the group as a whole (51%).

There were no marked differences by those paying/not paying council tax, those in receipt/not receiving Council Tax Benefit or disability.

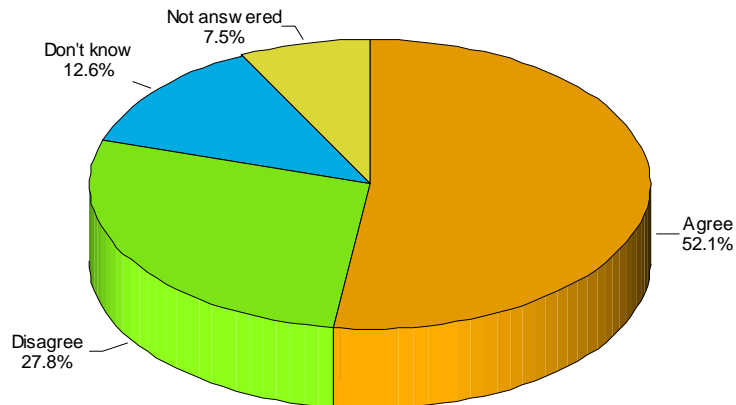
Q12. Do you agree that council tax support should be restricted where people live in more expensive property?



Those living in rural areas of Medway were more likely to agree that council tax support should be restricted where people live in more expensive property than any other area (70% compared to 50% of the group as a whole).

There were no marked differences by those paying/not paying council tax, those in receipt/not receiving Council Tax Benefit, gender, age, disability or current situation.

Q13. Do you agree with the increase to 25%?



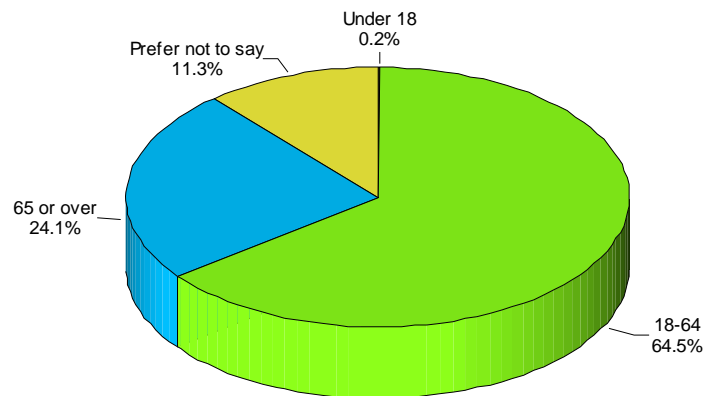
Those aged 65 or over were more likely to agree with the increase to 25% (65% compared to 52% of the group as a whole).

Unemployed respondents were less likely to agree (41% compared to 52% of the group as a whole) and more likely to disagree (39% compared to 28% of the group as a whole); whereas retired respondents were more likely to agree with the increase to 25% (67% compared to 52% of the group as a whole).

Those living in Strood were more likely to agree with the increase (74% compared to 52% of the group as a whole).

There were no marked differences by those paying/not paying council tax, those in receipt/not receiving Council Tax Benefit, gender or disability.

Q14. In which of the following age bands do you fall?



Those currently in receipt of Council Tax Benefit were more likely to be 65 or over (30% of those in receipt of Council Tax Benefit compared to 14% of those not receiving Council Tax Benefit).

Those with a disability were more likely to be 65 or over (33% of those with a disability compared to 18% of those without a disability).

Working, unemployed and those not working (disabled, looking after home/children, carer) were more likely to be aged 18-64 (99%, 94% and 97% respectively compared to 65% of the group as a whole); retired respondents were more likely to be aged 65 and over (79% compared to 24% of the group as a whole).

Those living in Chatham and Gillingham were more likely to be aged 18-64 (79% and 77% respectively compared to 65% of the group as a whole); whereas those living in Rainham and rural areas of Medway were more likely to be aged 65 or over (39% and 37% respectively compared to 24% of the group as a whole).

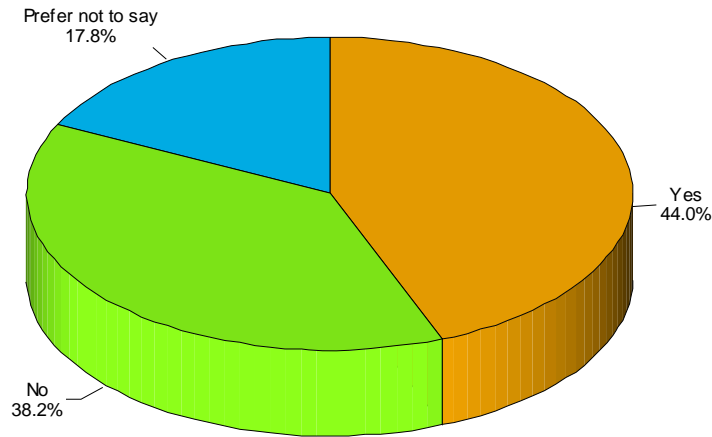
There were no marked differences by those paying/not paying council tax or gender.

Q15. What is your ethnic group?

	<b>Percentage of respondents</b>
White British	82.4
White Irish	0.7
Any other White background	1.4
Black or Black British	0.4
White and Asian	0.5
White and Black Caribbean	0.2
Asian or Asian British	0.7
Indian	0.4
Bangladeshi	0.2
Any other Asian background	0.2
Other ethnic group	0.2
Prefer not to say	12.7

Due to the very small sample size it was not possible to perform any cross tabulations on this data.

Q16. Do you have any long-term illness, health problem or disability, which limits your daily activity or the work you can do?



Those not currently paying council tax were more likely to have a disability (52%) compared to those paying council tax (37%).

Those currently in receipt of Council Tax Benefit were far more likely to have a disability (54%) than those not receiving Council Tax Benefit (12%)

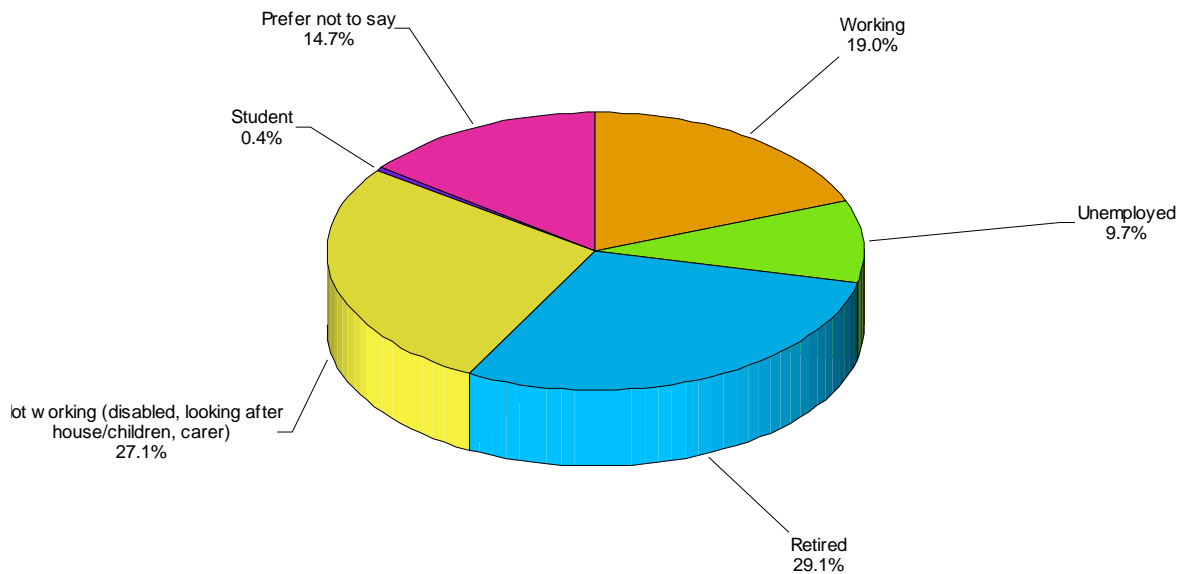
Males were more likely to have a disability than females (57% of males compared to 33% of females).

Those aged 65 or over were more likely to have a disability (60% compared to 44% of the group as a whole).

Retired respondents and those not working (disabled, looking after the home/children, carer) were more likely to have a disability (55% and 78% respectively compared to 44% of the group overall); whereas working respondents were less likely to have a disability (12% compared to 44% of the group overall).

Those living in rural areas of Medway were more likely to have a disability (56% compared to 44% of the group as a whole).

**Q17. Which of the following most accurately describes your current situation?**



Those currently paying council tax were more likely to be working (30% of those paying council tax compared to just 6% of those not paying council tax); whereas those not currently paying council tax were more likely to be unemployed (17% compared to just 4% of those paying council tax) or not working (disabled, looking after house/children, carer) (37% compared to 20% of those paying council tax).

Those in receipt of Council Tax Benefit were less likely to be working (9% compared to 48% of those not receiving Council Tax Benefit) and more likely to be retired (31% compared to 21% of those not receiving Council Tax Benefit) or not working (disabled, looking after house/children, carer) (34% compared to 7% of those not receiving Council Tax Benefit).

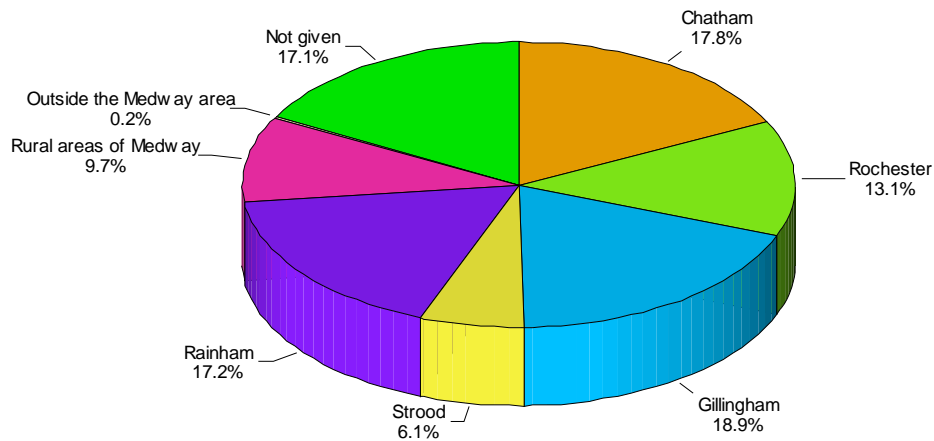
Females were twice as likely to be working (26% of females compared to 13% of males); whereas males were more likely to be retired (34% of males compared to 25% of females).

Those aged 65 or over were over three times more likely to be retired (96% compared to 29% of the group as a whole); whereas those aged 18-64 were more likely to be working (29% compared to 19% of the group as a whole) or not working (disabled, looking after house/children, carer) (41% compared to 27% of the group as a whole).

Those with a disability were less likely to be working (5% with a disability compared to 40% without a disability) and more likely to be retired (36% of those with a disability compared to 27% of those without a disability) or not working (disabled, looking after house/children, carer) (48% of those with a disability compared to 14% of those without a disability).

Those living in Rainham and rural areas of Medway were more likely to be retired (41% and 50% respectively compared to 29% of the group as a whole); whilst those living in Strood were more likely to be not working (disabled, looking after the home/children, carer) (41% compared to 27% of the group as a whole).

## Area:



Those aged 65 or over were more likely to live in Rainham (28% compared to 17% of the group as a whole).

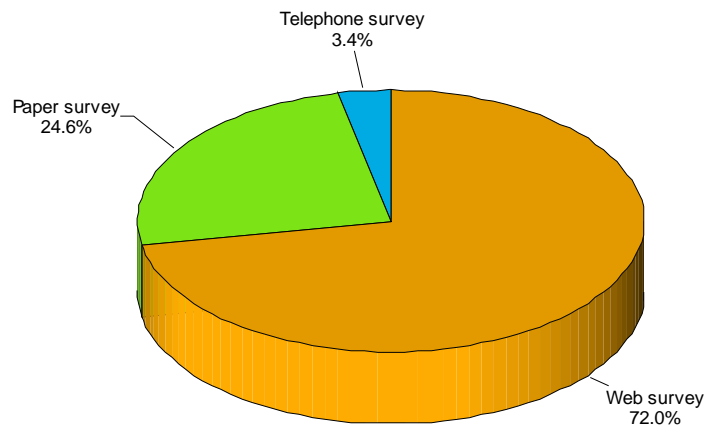
Retired respondents were less likely to complete a web survey (57% compared to 72% of the group overall) and more likely to complete a paper survey (43% compared to 25% of the group overall); whereas those not working (disabled, looking after the home/children, carer) were more likely to complete a web survey (83% compared to 72% of the group overall) and less likely to complete a paper survey (15% compared to a quarter of the group overall).

Those living in Chatham were more likely to complete a web survey (82% compared to 72% of the group overall); whereas those living in Rainham were more likely to complete a paper survey (35% compared to 25% of the group overall).

There were no marked differences by those paying/not paying council tax, those in receipt/not receiving Council Tax Benefit, gender or disability.



Research method:



Those aged 65 or over were more likely to complete a paper survey (44% compared to 25% of the group as a whole) and less likely to complete a web survey (55% compared to 72% of the group as a whole).

There were no marked differences by those paying/not paying council tax, those in receipt/not receiving Council Tax Benefit, gender or disability.





## APPENDIX E

### Local Council Tax Support – Correspondence received from individuals

Ref. No.	Agree proposals/comments	Working Age	Pension Age	Unknown
60	Agree in principle		x	
58	Agree in principle		x	
62	Agree in principle		X	
63	Agree in principle		x	
68	Agree in principle		x	
72	Agree in principle			x
71	Agrees with reduction to working age and welfare reform in general. Suggests that recovery is more vigorous		x	
73	Agree in principle		x	
69	Agree in principle & does not want cuts to services/job losses to occur		x	
70	Agree in principle		x	
74	Agree in principle			x
65	Agree but should be dependant on income & commitments		x	
77	Agree in principle		x	
64	Agrees but believes that it is punishing the poor. Suggests payment by results in council pay.		x	
91	Agrees all should pay something but work incentives for young needed, those who are low income or ill should be assisted, queries national tax rules/exemptions			
56	Believes all including pensioners should pay would be willing to pay contribution to bus pass		x	
57	Believes all including pensioners should pay		x	
17	Believes working age should contribute. Suggests reduction for rates on businesses, removing parking control cars, bringing local businesses back by more favourable terms		x	
28	Expects to pay "fair share" no other comment		x	
90	Agree in principle but believes survey should have allowed comment, unsure if all understood by average reader			x

	<b>Disagree/Comments</b>	<b>Working Age</b>	<b>Pension Age</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
66	Asks where younger people will get jobs to pay for ctax		x	
59	Views on present council and government. Believes that immigration rules should be considered in terms of those claiming benefit			x
76	Has always worked and now claiming due to sickness, believes should be based on number of adults as they use more services	x		
78	Believes that current system should be left and high earners not in receipt of benefit should pay more		x	
84	Annoyed as unable to include personal comments on survey. Believes those on low income should not be hit.		x	
10	Believes survey biased in favour of cuts. Will be affected by social sector cuts as well as ctax. On a low income, trying to find work and alternative accommodation. Believes the council could make cutbacks in terms of staffing and accommodation to assist towards funding.	x		
11	Believes survey biased as does not give opportunity for feedback. Believes disabled will be disadvantaged by options. Proposed 20/25% is too high for those who are unable to meet basic living costs.			x
24	Disagrees that LA should contribute to a national scheme		X	
58	Disagrees cuts could be made within LA	X		
	<b>Other/Comments</b>	<b>Working Age</b>	<b>Pension Age</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
6	Single and in receipt of sickness benefits & already pays extra rent. Has to go without food & electric at times. Objects that couples receive more help. Those who receive 100% benefits should contribute.	x		
75	Agree in principle but registered disabled should be protected			x
5	Cares for disabled daughter & believes she should be given additional because of this	x		
85	Has a reduced income due to disability. Suggests increasing council tax, discontinue waste of public funds, various examples given	x		
8	On income support and receives psychiatric help & medication. Believes cases of illness and disability should be protected but those who can work should contribute. Concerned as to how disabled will pay extra ctax.	x		

31	Working age - on DLA, doesn't understand but concerned	x		
4	Husband has mental health problems - proposal prompted overdose of wife. If she didn't provide care husband would be in residential care. Will face cuts under social housing restrictions. Urges consideration to large amount that carers save to be compared with smaller cost of the council tax increase.	x		
2	Asks that carers be protected, who are on a low income and in debt due to service they provide.	x		
3	Written on behalf of severely disabled daughter with 24 hour care needs. Daughter's budget will not allow additional payments in respect of council tax.	x		
89	Disabled and on low income - very concerned regarding debt	x		
7	Believes carers and disabled should be protected. CTAX Banding restrictions should apply dependant on means		x	
	<b>Agree to charging/comments</b>	<b>Working Age</b>	<b>Pension Age</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
67	Suggests that more than 2 in property should pay more		x	
9	Suggests that increase in ctax across the board by 3.5% will reduce on working age to maximum 15%			x
92	Believes all options mentioned by MH should be considered before charging those on low income			x
34	Believes contribution from those who have never paid into system is reasonable		x	
29	Pensioner expects to contribute but finds it difficult, believes govt waste money eg fuel payments		x	
88	Disagrees no other comment			
87	Disagrees no other comment		x	
86	No clear comment, believes authority should consider and make decision			x
32	Pensioner -concerned re personal affect but willing to pay		x	
	<b>Unclear/comments</b>	<b>Working Age</b>	<b>Pension Age</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
61	Struggling on pension. Sees younger people with more money while not working. Believes immigration is an issue. Agrees with radical welfare reform but with protection for pensioners and disabled		x	

80	Finds situation untenable but agrees those who don't pay into system should be made to pay	x		
55	Believes that VAT should be passed to Council to pay for benefits			x
13	Unable to comment without clear information. Believes more meaningful information should be provided. Believes survey is a method to canvas and ignore opinion			x
12	Believes salaries and pensions for Council should be cut and subject to freeze. Discontinue use of consultants.		x	
54	Believes council tax is unpaid due to poor workmanship throughout borough		x	
51	Feels unable to comment		x	
79	Limited income due to illness feels unable to comment	x		
52	Hopes own benefit will not alter		x	
82	No real comment - concerned re personal effect		x	
50	Hopes new scheme will provide more help to pensioners		x	
83	Not in receipt of benefit and not interested in council policy			x
49	Believes nationally pensioner income is being eroded, unable to comment on proposals		x	
81	Believes unfair wonders how genuine claimants will cope			x
53	Feels unable to comment		x	
47	Receives disability benefits but no real comment made			x
46	Lack of money for pensioners, issues re drugs, immigration, large families, non workers		x	
43	Very unclear as to actual comment			x
44	Query re survey access			x
41	Very unclear as to actual comment			x
42	Believes people should contribute to local area for 5 years before claiming help		x	
25	Very unclear as to actual comment		x	
14	Suggest council should cut out waste and inefficiency eg in electoral registration by only sending one form close to deadline		x	
15	Query re personal effect - no comments on proposal	x		
16	Query re personal affect - no comments on proposal	x		

18	Unclear as to actual comment, veers towards contribution		x	
35	Believes Council best placed to make decision		x	
36	Query re personal affect - no comments on proposal		x	
19	Pensioner - concerned - no comment		x	
21	Believes survey should have allowed comment. Suggests council and government should reconsider internal budgets			x
22	Very unclear as to actual comment		x	
23	Suggests immigration an issue		x	
45	Pensioner - unable to make out clear comment		x	
26	Suggests immigration an issue		x	
20	Query re personal affect - no comments on proposal		x	
30	Query re personal affect - no comments on proposal, wife is carer, both pensioners		x	
27	Pensioner concerned re personal affect		x	
33	Pensioner - disabled, concerned re personal affect		x	
48	Believes Council best informed to make decision		x	
37	Hopes that families not left in debt		x	
38	Suggests that people with high savings should be excluded from support, suggests savings can be made from wealthy e.g. means testing heating allowances		x	
39	Unable to comment		x	
40	Query re % calculation for liability reduction			x



## **APPENDIX F**

### **Local Council Tax Support – Correspondence received from organisations**

AH/am

1<sup>st</sup> November 2012

Mick Hayward  
Chief Finance Officer  
Medway Council  
Gun Wharf  
Dock Road  
Chatham  
Kent  
ME4 4TR

Dear Mick

### **Proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Council's proposal's for a local council tax support scheme for Medway.

I do understand the financial pressures on Medway Council and that the Council are endeavouring to respond in a positive and fair manner to the abolition of the national CTB scheme. It is also recognised that the Council has no alternative, other than reducing services, to fund the £3.3 million shortfall by spreading the cost of this across the claims of all 14,200 working age claimants. We have therefore endeavoured to comment in a constructive way to changes that will undoubtedly cause additional hardship on many of our customers.

Approximately, 2,900 of our tenants are of a working age and in receipt of CTB. Many of these will be directly affected by the welfare reforms coming into effect in April 2013. We are extremely concerned about the compound effect that all of these reductions will have on some of the most deprived households in Medway. Inevitably, taken together these changes will increase deprivation, homelessness, personal debt and child poverty.

I would comment specifically on the proposed local council tax support scheme as follows:



Broadside  
Leviathan Way  
Chatham  
Kent ME4 4LL

**T:** 01634 565333

**E:** [contactus@mhs.org.uk](mailto:contactus@mhs.org.uk)

[www.mhs.org.uk](http://www.mhs.org.uk)

Registered Name:  
**mhs homes limited**

Registered Office:  
**Broadside, Leviathan Way,  
Chatham, Kent ME4 4LL**

Registered under:



### **Maximum Support Threshold**

It is essential that the most deprived households are protected. On this basis, our preference would be for the maximum support to be 80% (rather than 75%) of council tax liability.

### **Capping to Band C**

We have significant concerns about the proposal to cap the amount of council tax support for those living in more expensive properties to a Band C property. This will disproportionately affect larger families at a time when they may already be being affected through benefit caps. Should the Council still decide to introduce a cap, then setting this at Band D rather than Band C would be much fairer.

### **Impact on Under 25's**

We have major concerns that the scheme, as currently drafted, does not take into account the impact on young people. The level of benefit for single people under 25 is much lower than that for people over 25 and for couples (£56.25 against £71.00 and £111.45 respectively). Therefore, the ability of under 25's to pay towards their council tax bill is greatly reduced and the local council tax support scheme needs to reflect this. We would suggest that under 25's should be eligible for 100% support or receive a young persons discount to avoid financial hardship.

### **Deduction for Non-dependants Under 25**

At the moment no deduction is made for a young person on income-related JSA or in the assessment phase of income-related ESA. This reflects the fact their income is lower than for someone over 25. Under the new scheme, the same deduction will be made as for those over 25.

The government is trying to encourage young people under 25 to remain at home. This will put a further burden on families who are on low incomes. Parents may not be able to support them and this could lead to more young people becoming homeless.

### **Income Taper**

Given the push from central government to encourage people to move from benefits to work, the proposed increase of the income taper from 20% to 25% will mean that people will have to earn even more to enable them to



be able to afford to take up job opportunities. This proposal will potentially penalise those that are trying to get off of benefits. We believe that the taper should be left at 20%.

**Protection - War Widow or War Disablement Pension**

We support the Council's proposal that working-age people who receive a war widow or war disablement pension will be protected in the same way as pensioners. In practice, the number of people who fall into this category will be very small.

I hope that these comments are helpful and assist Medway Council in developing a council tax support scheme that is fair and equitable. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ashley Hook', is positioned above the printed name.

Ashley Hook  
Chief Executive

Council Tax Collection Team  
Medway Council  
Gun Wharf  
Dock Road  
Chatham  
Kent ME4 4TR

MEDWAY COUNCIL	
FILE REF	
09 OCT 2012	
TO:	
ACTION:	INITIALS

5 October 2012

FAO Mr M Hayward, Chief Finance Officer  
Proposed changes for a local council tax support scheme

Dear Mr Hayward

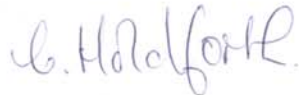
I am the Housing and Rent Officer for Kent Autistic Trust and responsible for 13 autistic tenants who are in receipt of Housing and Council Tax Benefits. They have recently received letters from Medway Council informing them of the proposed changes to working-age people and the anticipation that they will have to pay something towards their Council Tax.

I have read the proposed documents and the **government states that pensioners will be protected and support for their council tax will be similar to current CTB and governed by national rules and eligibility.** You propose to extend this protection to working-age people who receive a war widow or war disablement pension.

Will you be extending this proposal to vulnerable adults of working-age, such as our tenants with autism (i.e. with a learning difficulty or/or disability)? Our tenants all receive DLA and other related benefits. Managing their finances is difficult enough and it will cause great distress if they have to contribute towards their Council Tax.

I realise this is still only a proposal and in consultation but confirmation from you that vulnerable adults will be protected from any new changes would be appreciated and then I will be able to reassure my tenants that they will not be affected.

Yours sincerely,



Chrissy Holdforth  
Housing and Rent Officer  
[Chrissy@kentaustistic.com](mailto:Chrissy@kentaustistic.com)



Kent Autistic Trust

*A better life, a better future*

HEAD OFFICE  
14 HIGH STREET  
BROMPTON  
GILLINGHAM  
KENT ME7 5AE

AREA OFFICE  
MANOR HOUSE  
BENTLEY ROAD  
ASHFORD  
KENT TN24 0HP

TELEPHONE: 01634 405168  
FACSIMILE: 01634 811282  
Email: [office@kentaustistic.com](mailto:office@kentaustistic.com)

-9 OCT 2012



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