

# Council tax support and council tax discounts 2018/19

Consultation report by Strategy, Performance and Partnerships

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## Summary

Rushmoor Borough Council has been reviewing its council tax support scheme for 2018/19 and consulted on four options.

- **Option one: Increase the minimum amount of council tax that working age people pay from 10% (90% discount).** This increase ranged from 12% (88% discount) up to 25% (75% discount).
- **Option two: To exclude the new bereavement support payment when we calculate council tax support.**
- **Option three: Limit the number of dependent children to two when we calculate council tax support.**
- **Option four: Other ways of meeting the shortfall in the council's funding.** Including increasing council tax, reducing spending on other services or increasing income and using council reserves.

At the same time, Rushmoor also looked at the discounts we offer on properties that are empty and unfurnished in the short-term, or empty because major work or structural alterations are being carried out on them. In total, there were 482 surveys returned.

The characteristics of the respondents indicated that those who received council tax support are more likely to be of working age, female and have a disability or illness that affects their day to day life, than those who indicated that they didn't receive council tax support.

### Section one council tax support

- The majority of respondents agreed with increasing the minimum contribution towards council tax to 12% (88% discount) for **option one**, they disagreed with increasing it to 15%, 18%, 20% and 25%. The main theme of the open question was keeping the contribution rate to the same, at 10%
- The majority of respondents agreed with **option two** (to exclude the new bereavement support payment when council tax support is calculated)
- The majority of respondents agreed with **option three** (to limit the number of dependent children to two when council tax support is calculated)
- For **option four** other ways of meeting the shortfall in the council's funding. The majority of respondents agreed with using the council tax reserves and disagreed with increasing council tax and reducing spending on other services or increasing income. The main theme of the open question was that the Council could save money by reducing staff/pay/perks

## Section two council tax discounts and exemptions

- The majority of respondents agreed with a 50% council tax discount for six months for homes that are having major repairs or structural alterations done to them. They disagreed with a 50% council tax discount for 12 months (as it is now), a 40% discount for 12 months, a 100% discount for one month and no discount
- The majority of respondents disagreed with all of the opinions offered for homes that are unoccupied and unfurnished. The options were:
  - 100% discount for three months (as now)
  - 100% discount for two months
  - 100% discount for one month
  - No discount

## Introduction

Rushmoor provides help to people on a low income, who need a hand paying their council tax bill. This help is known as council tax support and we target this support where it is needed most.

Like all councils, Rushmoor continues to face reductions in funding, so it must make sure that its council tax support scheme is affordable and fair to all council tax payers. Rushmoor has therefore been reviewing its council tax support scheme for 2018/19 and consulted on the options being considered. The options were:

- **Option one: Increase the minimum amount of council tax that working age people pay from 10% (90% discount).** This increase ranged from 12% (88% discount) up to 25% (75% discount)
- **Option two: To exclude the new bereavement support payment when we calculate council tax support**
- **Option three: Limit the number of dependent children to two when we calculate council tax support**
- **Option four: Other ways of meeting the shortfall in the council's funding.** Including increasing council tax, reducing spending on other services or increasing income and using use council reserves

At the same time, Rushmoor was also looking at the discounts they offer on properties that are empty and unfurnished in the short-term, or empty because major work or structural alterations are being carried out on them.

## Methodology

Working age residents who receive council tax support were sent letters (Appendix A), 2,566 in total and 1,458 letters were sent to residents who received a council tax discount because they had an empty property in the last five years (Appendix B), informing them of the survey, and giving the link to the survey to be filled in online. The survey was an online survey however paper copies (Appendix C) were available if requested and available at the Council Offices and Citizen Advice Rushmoor.

The survey was also promoted via the Council's website and social media (Facebook and Twitter). The details of the survey were also sent to 3,688 people who have signed up via email to receive news or information about consultations from Rushmoor Borough Council.

The survey ran from Monday 6 November 2017 until Sunday 17 December 2017.

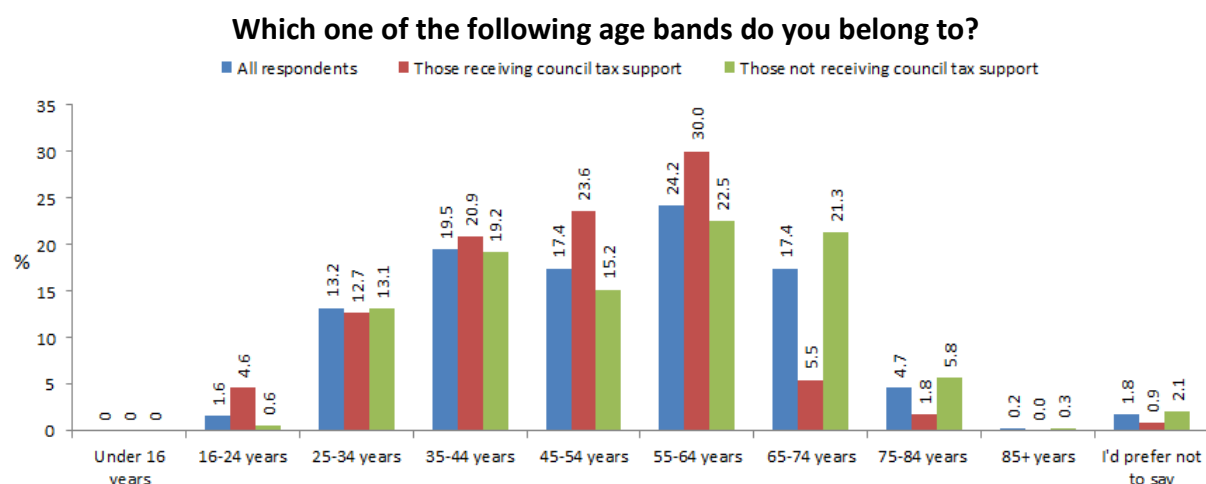
## Responses

In total, there were 482 surveys returned (479 online and 3 paper surveys). 110 respondents (23.0%) identified themselves as being in receipt of council tax support and nine (1.9%) identified themselves as receiving a council tax discount because they had an empty home. The number of respondents receiving council tax discount because they had an empty home, is too small to be statistically significant.

## Characteristics of the respondents

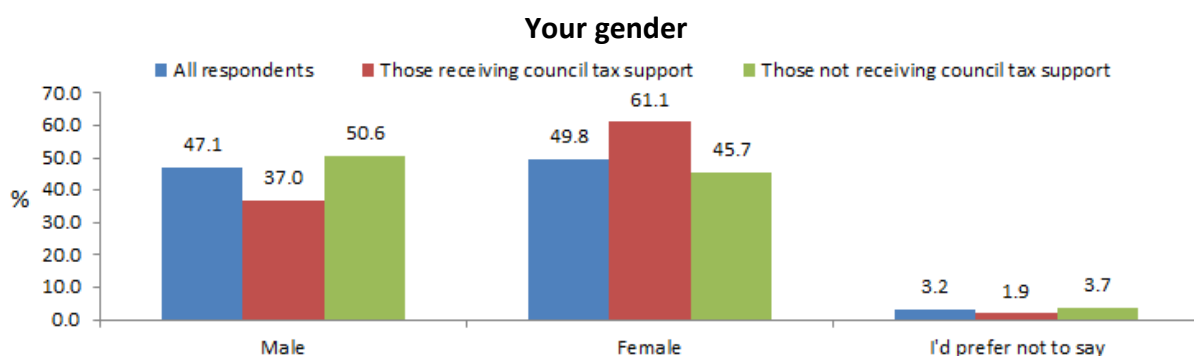
### Age

Details of the survey were sent to all those of working age receiving council tax support, this is reflected in the age profile of respondents. With 91.8% of those who indicated that they received council tax support being between the ages of 16-64, compared with 70.6% of those not receiving council tax support.



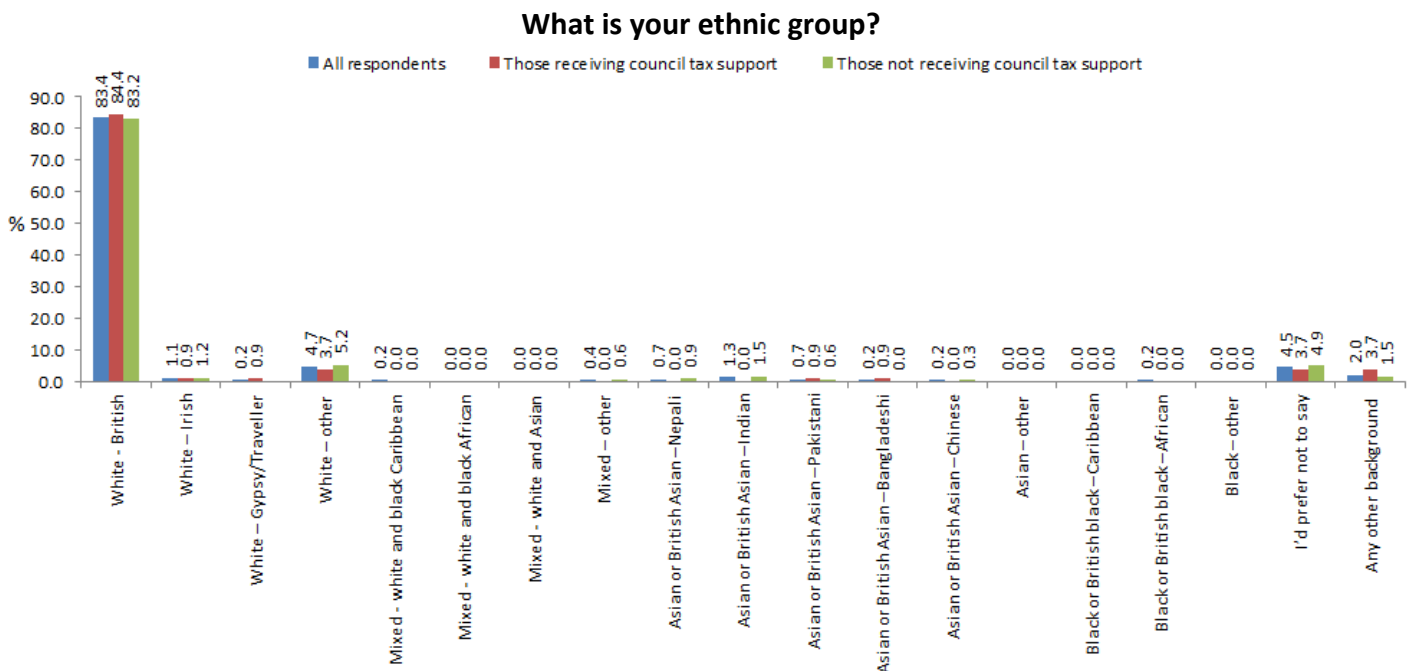
### Gender

Overall, 49.8% of respondents were female and 47.1% were male (3.2% preferred not to say). However, 61.1% of those on council tax support indicated they were female, compared to 45.7% of those not on council tax support.



## Ethnic group

The largest ethnic group filling in the survey was white-British. Overall, 83.4% of respondents identified that they were white –British. There were no significant differences between those receiving council tax support and those not receiving council tax support.

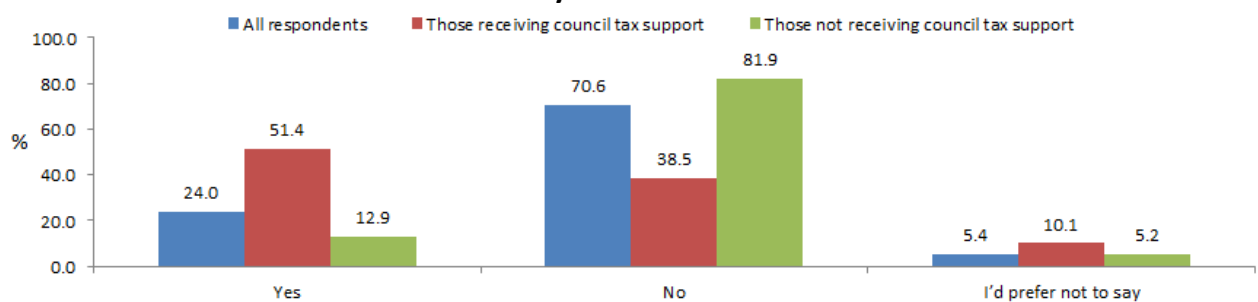


Of the nine people who filled in the any other background, seven indicated that they were English or white English, one indicated they were Arab and one indicated that they were Human.

## Health conditions or disabilities

Overall, 24.0% of respondents indicated that they had a health conditions or disabilities, which limited their daily activities. However, 51.4% of those on council tax support indicated they had a health conditions or disabilities, which limited their daily activities, compared to 12.9% of those not on council tax support.

### Do you consider yourself to have any health conditions or disabilities, which limit your daily activities?



## Results - Section one - Council tax support

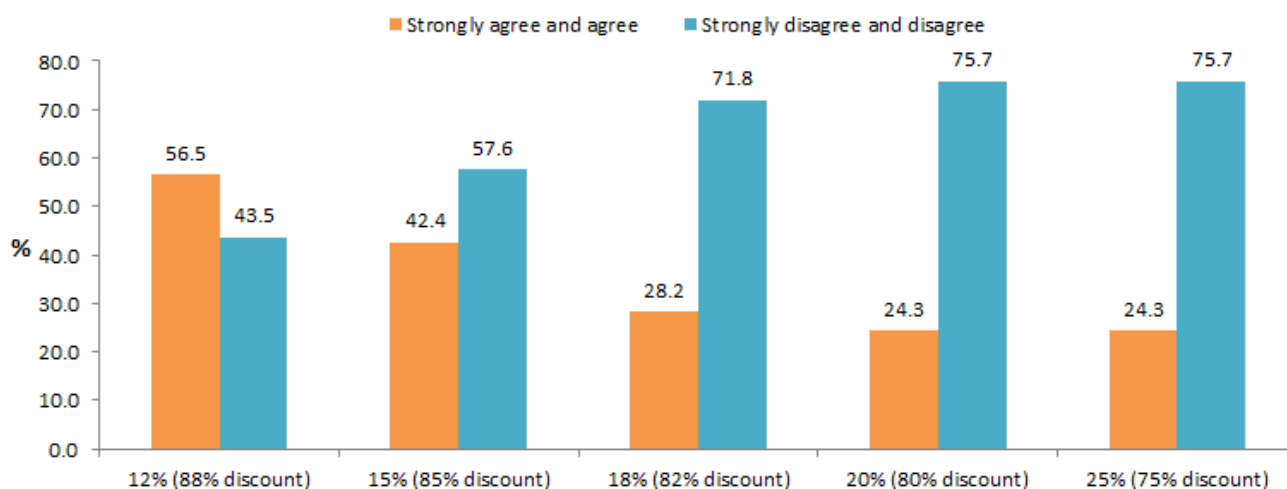
**Option one: Increase the minimum amount of council tax that working age people pay from 10% (90% discount).**

**Question 1: How much do you agree or disagree that we should increase the minimum amount of council tax that working age people have to pay by the following options?**

Overall, there was only support to increase the minimum contribution to 12% (88% discount). 425 respondents filled in this part of the question, with 240 respondents (56.5%) strongly agreeing or agreeing and 184 respondents (43.5%) strongly disagreeing or disagreeing. More respondent disagreed and strongly disagreed, than agreed and strongly agreed to increase the amount to 15% (85% discount), 18% (82% discount), 20% (80% discount) and 25% (75% discount).

	Strongly agree % (number)	Agree % (number)	Disagree % (number)	Strongly disagree % (number)	Total Number of responses
12% (88% discount)	27.5% (117)	28.9% (123)	14.1% (60)	29.4% (125)	<b>425</b>
15% (85% discount)	21.3% (89)	21.1% (88)	18.2% (76)	39.3% (164)	<b>417</b>
18% (82% discount)	10.5% (43)	17.6% (72)	25.5% (104)	46.3% (189)	<b>408</b>
20% (80% discount)	13.4% (55)	10.9% (45)	22.4% (92)	53.3% (219)	<b>411</b>
25% (75% discount)	18.2% (77)	6.1% (26)	17.7% (75)	57.9% (245)	<b>423</b>

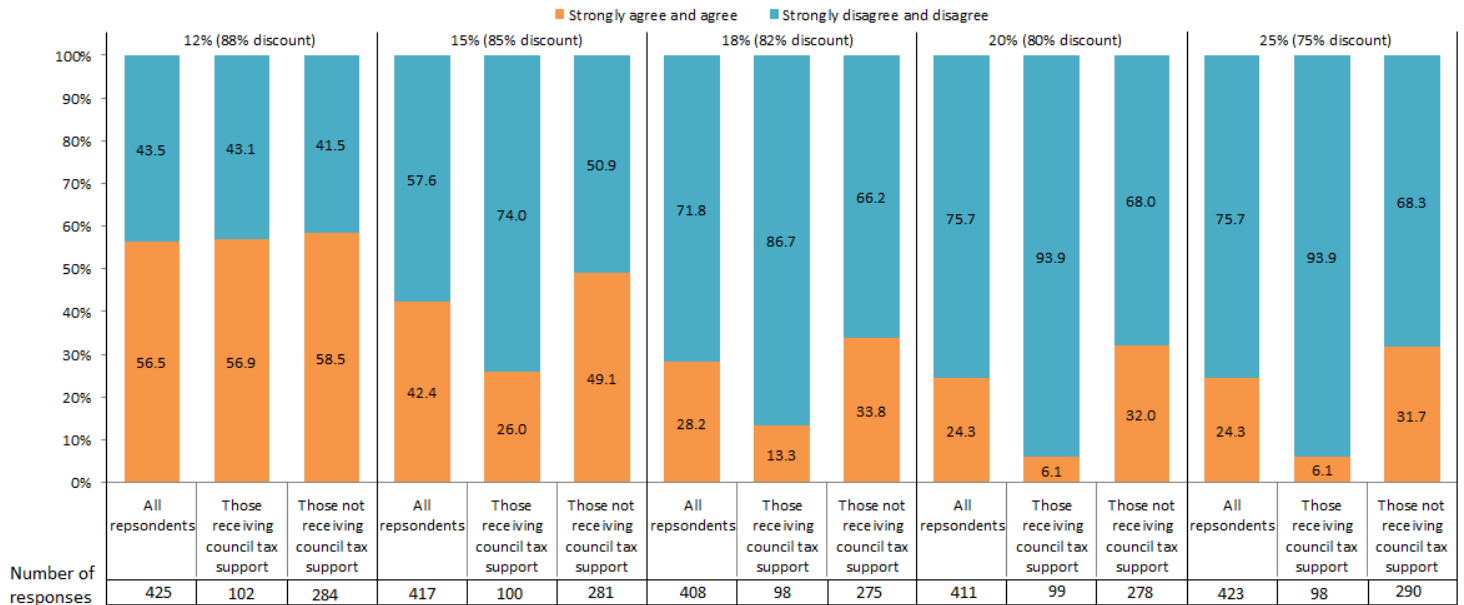
**How much do you agree or disagree that we should increase the minimum amount of council tax that working age people have to pay to 12%, 15%, 18%, 20% and 25%?**





When you look at the responses split by those who receive council tax support and those who don't, overall, both groups agreed with the contribution rising to 12% and both groups disagreed with a rise to 15%, 18%, 20% and 25%. Those who receive council tax support were less in favour of the contribution rising to 15%, 18%, 20% and 25%, than those who don't receive council tax support.

**Responses to question 1 split by all respondents, those receiving council tax support and those not receiving council tax support**



**Question 2: If you think the minimum amount should be higher or lower, please tell us what amount you think it should be**

There were 142 comments to this question, the main themes of the responses were (those mention more than 5 times):

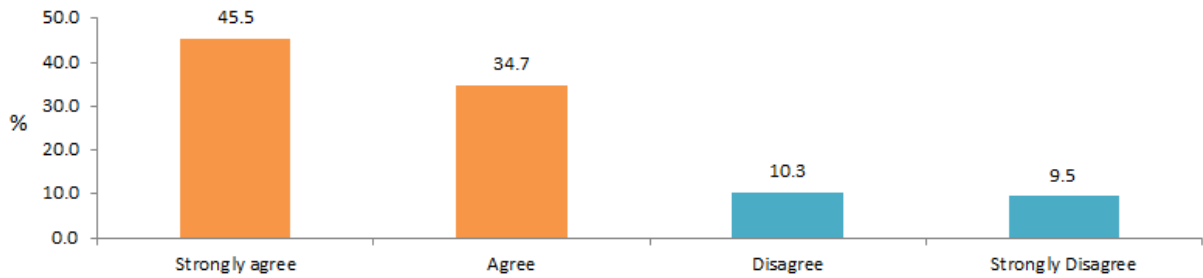
- 10% or leave it as it is (mentioned 53 times)
- People are struggling/this will cause hardship to the poorest (mentioned 20 times)
- Lower (mentioned 9 times)
- 12% (mentioned 9 times)
- 0% (mentioned 7 times)
- Unhappy about subsidising people (mentioned 7 times)
- 50% (mentioned 6 times)

**Option two: To exclude the new bereavement support payment when we calculate council tax support.**

**Question 3: How much do you agree or disagree that we should exclude the new bereavement support payment when we calculate council tax support?**

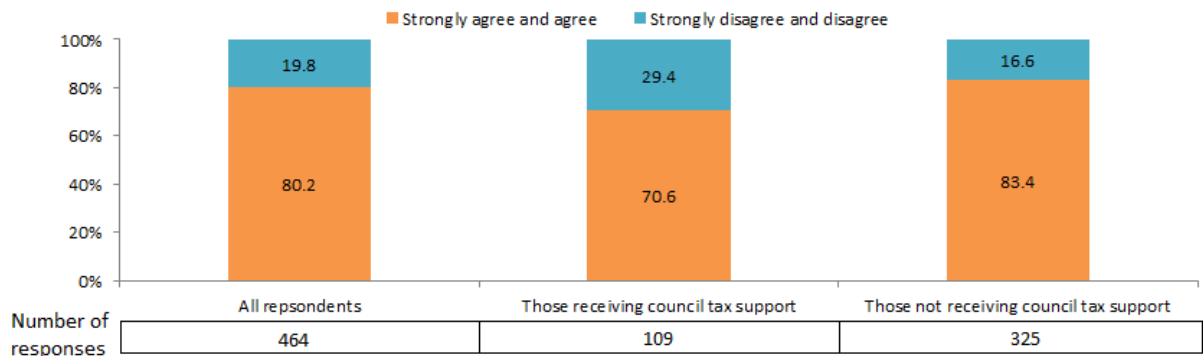
In total 464 respondents filled in this question, 80.2% (372 respondents) agreed or agreed strongly that bereavement support payment should not be considered when council tax support is calculated. 92 respondents (19.8%) disagreed or disagreed strongly.

**How much do you agree or disagree that we should exclude the new bereavement support payment when we calculate council tax support?**



When you look at the responses from those who do receive council tax support and those who don't receive council tax support, both groups of respondents agreed overall that Rushmoor should exclude the new bereavement support payment from council tax support calculations. 70.6% of those receiving council tax support agreed and 83.4% of those not receiving council tax support agreed.

**Responses to question 3 split by all respondents, those receiving council tax support and those not receiving council tax support**

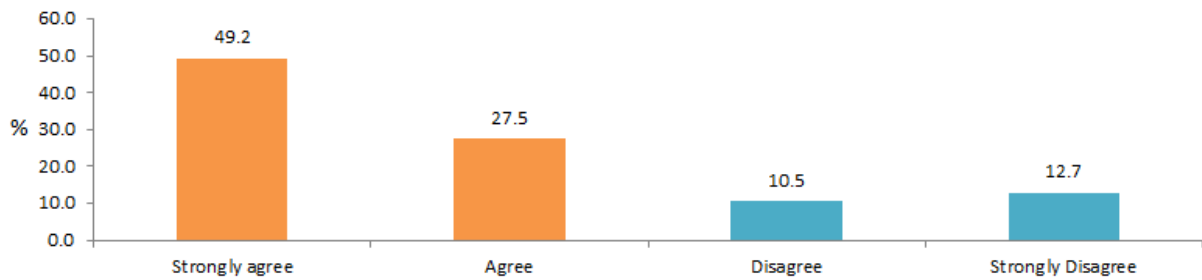


**Option 3: Limit the number of dependent children to two when we calculate council tax support.**

**Question 4: How much do you agree or disagree that we should limit the number of dependent children to two when we calculate council tax support?**

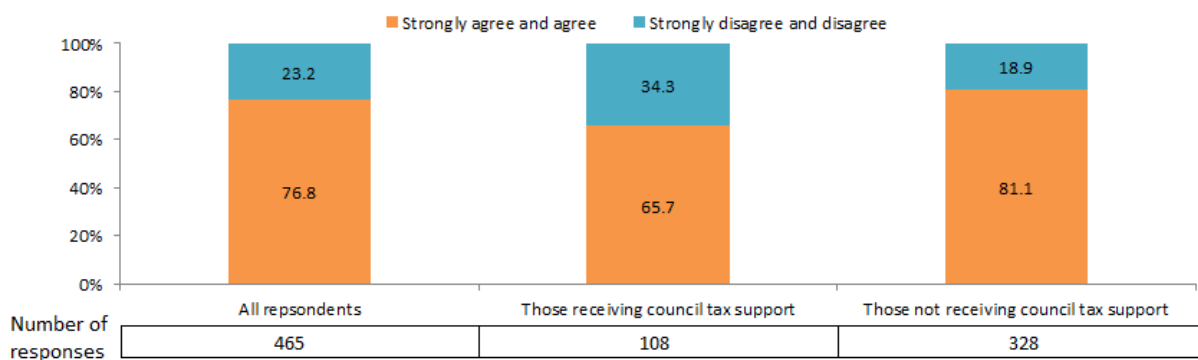
In total 465 respondents filled in this question, 76.8% (357 respondents) agreed or agreed strongly that when council tax support is calculated it should be limited to two dependent children. 108 respondents (23.2%) disagreed or disagreed strongly.

**How much do you agree or disagree that we should limit the number of dependent children to two when we calculate council tax support?**



When you look at the responses from those who do receive council tax support and those who don't receive council tax support, both groups of respondents agreed overall that Rushmoor should limit the number of dependent children to two when calculating council tax support. 65.9% of those receiving council tax support agreed and 80.6% of those not receiving council tax support agreed.

**Responses to question 4 split by all respondents, those receiving council tax support and those not receiving council tax support**

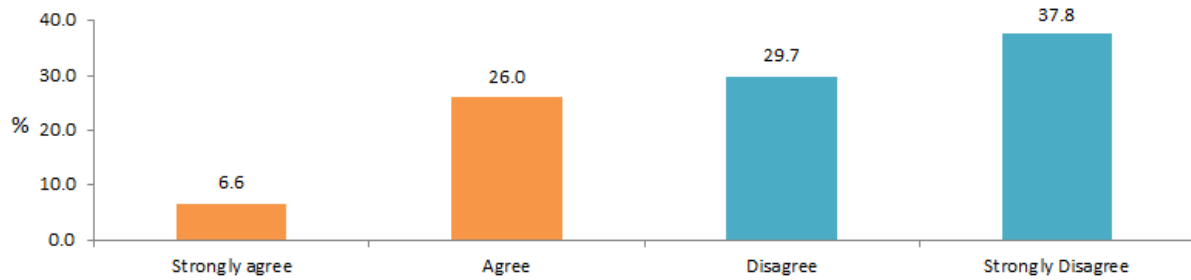


**Option four: Other ways of meeting the shortfall in the council's funding.**

**Question 5: How much do you agree or disagree that we should increase council tax to meet the shortfall?**

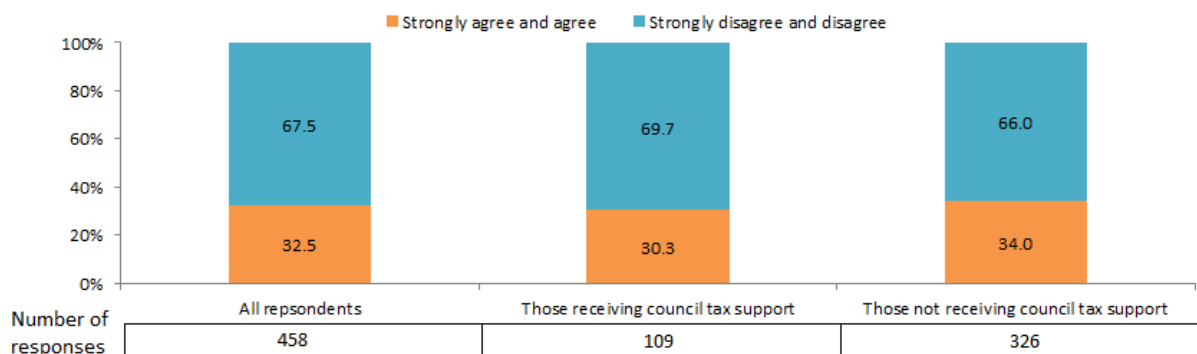
In total 458 respondents filled in this question, 67.5% (309 respondents) disagreed or disagreed strongly that council tax should be increased to meet the shortfall. 149 respondents (32.5%) agreed or agreed strongly.

**How much do you agree or disagree that we should increase council tax to meet the shortfall?**



When you look at the responses from those who do receive council tax support and those who don't receive council tax support, both groups of respondents disagreed overall that Rushmoor should increase council tax to meet the shortfall. 73.5% of those receiving council tax support disagreed and 63.4% of those not receiving council tax support disagreed.

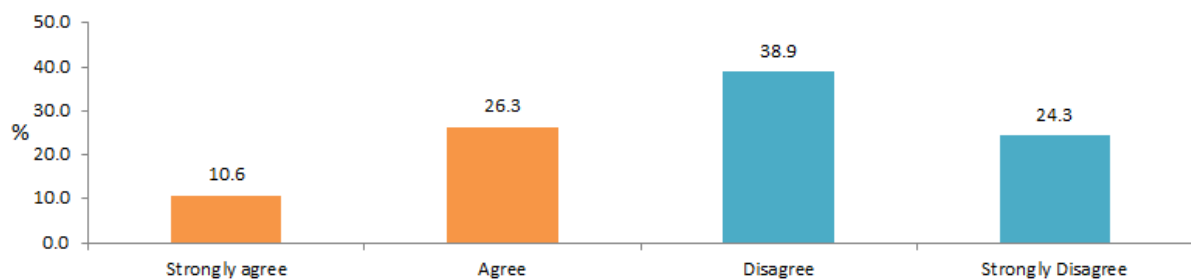
**Responses to question 5 split by all respondents, those receiving council tax support and those not receiving council tax support**



**Question 6a: How much do you agree or disagree that we should reduce spending on other services or increase income to meet the shortfall?**

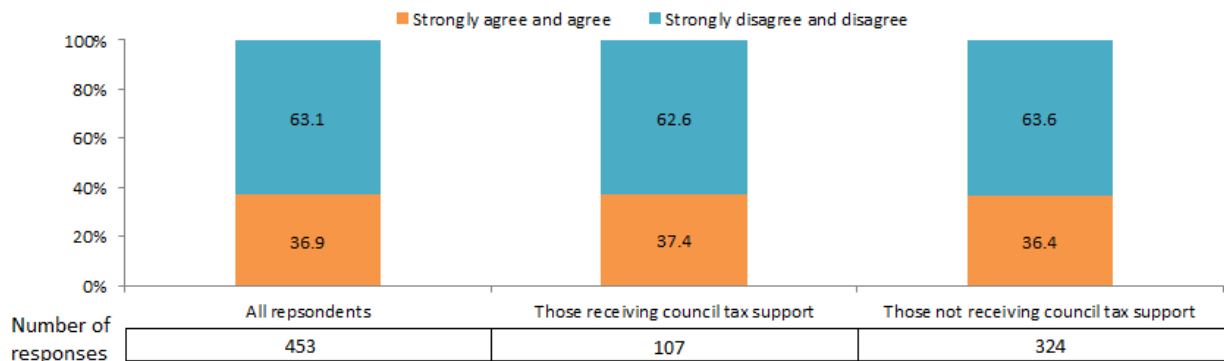
In total 453 respondents filled in this question, 63.1% (286 respondents) disagreed or disagreed strongly that the council should reduce spending on other services or increase income to meet the shortfall. 167 respondents (36.9%) agreed or agreed strongly.

**How much do you agree or disagree that we should reduce spending on other services or increase income to meet the shortfall?**



When you look at the responses from those who do receive council tax support and those who don't receive council tax support, both groups of respondents disagreed overall that Rushmoor should reduce spending on other services or increase income to meet the short fall. 62.6% of those receiving council tax support disagreed and 63.6% of those not receiving council tax support disagreed.

**Responses to question 6a split by all respondents, those receiving council tax support and those not receiving council tax support**



**Question 6b: If you answered strongly agree or agree, please tell us how you think we could reduce spending or increase income.**

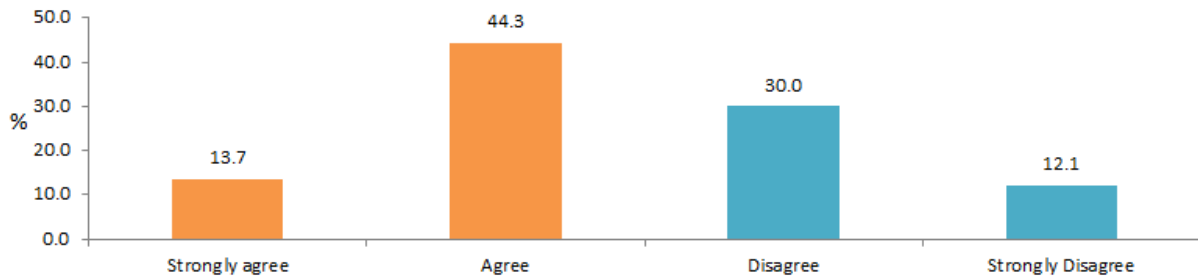
In total there were 136 comments to this question. The main themes of the responses were (those mention more than 5 times):

- Reduce staff/pay/perks (mentioned 28 times)
- Less of/money on flowers/parks/grass cutting (mentioned 10 times)
- Reduce councillor/pay/perks (mentioned 10 times)
- Reduce benefits (mentioned 10 times)
- Stop weekly bin collections (mentioned 9 times)
- More efficient/better procurement (mentioned 8 times)
- No cuts to services (mentioned 5 times)
- Increase parking charges (mentioned 5 times)
- Stop wasting money on road schemes/roadworks (mentioned 5 times)
- Increase business rates (mentioned 5 times)

**Question 7: How much do you agree or disagree that we should use council reserves to meet the shortfall?**

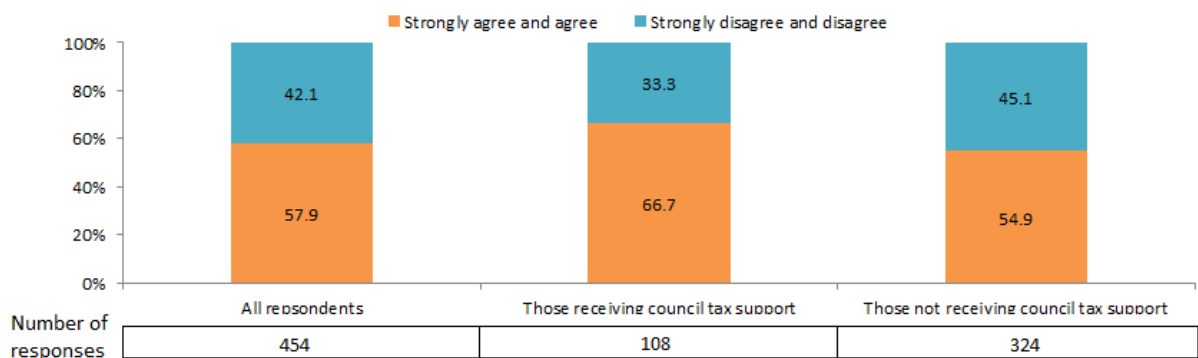
In total 454 respondents filled in this question, 57.9% (263 respondents) agreed or agreed strongly that the council should use council reserves to meet the shortfall. 191 respondents (42.1%) disagreed or disagreed strongly.

### How much do you agree or disagree that we should use council reserves to meet the shortfall?



When you look at the responses from those who do receive council tax support and those who don't receive council tax support, both groups of respondents agreed overall that Rushmoor should use council reserves to meet the shortfall. 65.0% of those receiving council tax support agreed and 53.7% of those not receiving council tax support agreed.

### Responses to question 7 split by all respondents, those receiving council tax support and those not receiving council tax support



## Section one summary table

Council Tax Support options summary	Majority of respondents agreed with:	Majority of respondents disagreed with:
<b>Option one:</b> Increase the minimum amount of council tax that working age people pay from 10% (90% discount).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raising the council tax contribution level to 12% (88% discount)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raising the council tax contribution level to 15%, 18%, 20% and 25%</li> </ul>
<b>Option two:</b> To exclude the new bereavement support payment when we calculate council tax support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excluding the new bereavement support payment</li> </ul>	
<b>Option three:</b> Limit the number of dependent children to two when we calculate council tax support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limiting the number of dependent children to two</li> </ul>	
<b>Option four:</b> Other ways of meeting the shortfall in the council's funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using council reserves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing council tax</li> <li>Reducing spending on other services or increase income</li> </ul>

## Section two - council tax discounts and exemptions for 2018/19

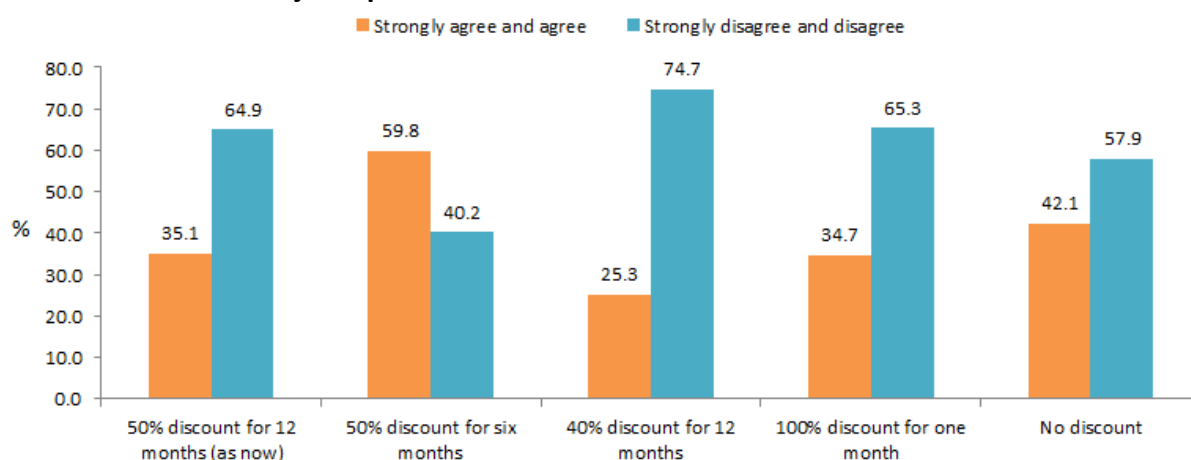
### Homes that are having major repairs or structural alterations done to them

#### Question 8: How much do you agree or disagree with the following options for homes that are having major repairs or structural alterations done to them?

Overall, there was only support to give a 50% discount for six months. 388 respondents filled in this part of the question, with 232 respondents (59.8%) strongly agreeing or agreeing and 156 respondents (40.2%) strongly disagreeing or disagreeing. More respondent disagreed and strongly disagreed, than agreed and strongly agreed to 50% discount for 12 months (as now), 40% discount for 12 months, 100% discount for one month and no discount.

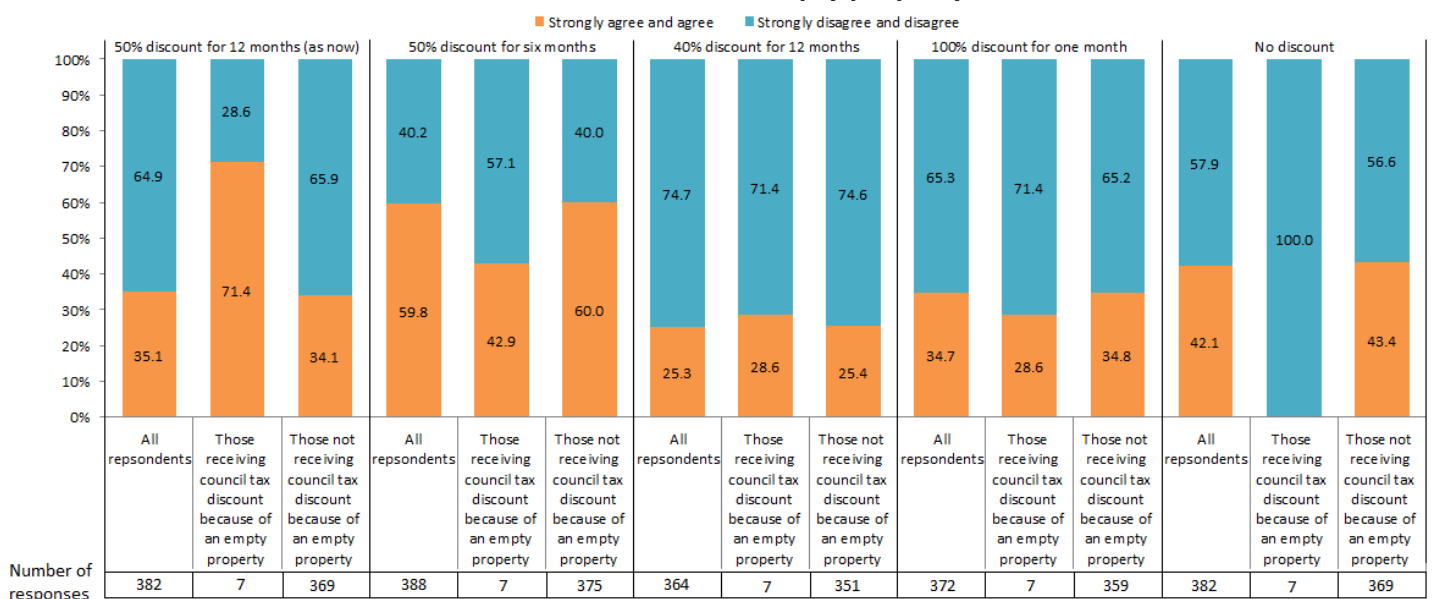
	Strongly agree % (number)	Agree % (number)	Disagree % (number)	Strongly disagree % (number)	Total Number of responses
50% discount for 12 months (as now)	16.0% (61)	19.1% (73)	31.7% (121)	33.2% (127)	<b>382</b>
50% discount for six months	22.9% (89)	36.9% (143)	16.5% (64)	23.7% (92)	<b>388</b>
40% discount for 12 months	6.0% (22)	19.2% (70)	39.0% (142)	35.7% (130)	<b>364</b>
100% discount for one month	14.8% (55)	19.9% (74)	30.9% (115)	34.4% (128)	<b>372</b>
No discount	27.0% (103)	15.2% (58)	28.5% (109)	29.2% (112)	<b>382</b>

#### How much do you agree or disagree with the following options for homes that are having major repairs or structural alterations done to them?



Only seven people that answered the question indicated that they receive a council tax discount because they have an empty property, which is a very small number and not statistically significant. However, their responses did differ from those who don't receive council tax discount because of an empty property. Those who do receive a council tax discount were much more in favour of keeping the 50% discount for 12 months (71.4% agreed) than those who don't receive a council tax discount (34.1% agreed). Also, 100% of those who do receive a council tax discount disagreed with no discount, compared with 56.6% of those who don't receive a council tax discount.

**Responses to question 8 split by all respondents, those receiving council tax discount because of an empty property and those not receiving council tax discount because of an empty property**



## Homes that are unoccupied and unfurnished

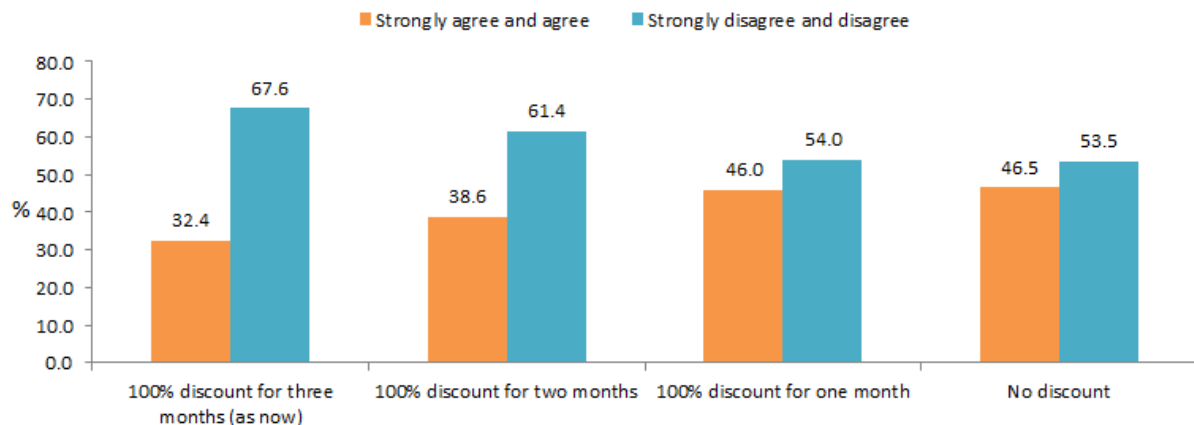
### Question 9: How much do you agree or disagree with the following options for homes that are unoccupied and unfurnished?

Overall, there wasn't majority support for any the options. The strongest support was for no discount, 398 respondents filled in this part of the question, with 185 respondents (46.5%) strongly agreed or agreed and 213 respondents (53.5%) strongly disagreed or disagreed. 125 (32.4%) respondents agreed and strongly agreed with 100% discount for three months (as it now), 144 (38.6%) respondents agreed and strongly agreed with 100% discount for discount for two months and 171 (46.0%) respondents agreed and strongly agreed with 100% discount for one months.



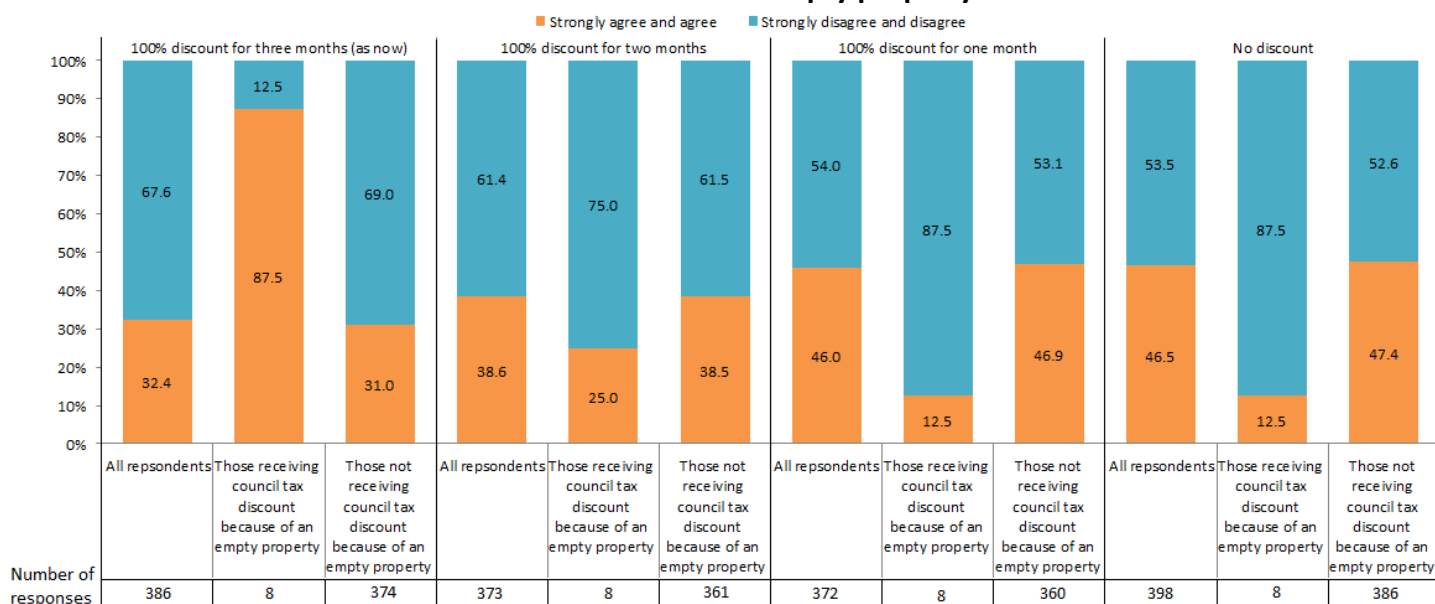
	Strongly agree % (number)	Agree % (number)	Disagree % (number)	Strongly disagree % (number)	Total Number of responses
100% discount for three months (as now)	17.1% (66)	15.3% (59)	26.9% (104)	40.7% (157)	386
100% discount for two months	11.3% (42)	27.3% (102)	25.7% (96)	35.7% (133)	373
100% discount for one month	15.6% (58)	30.4% (113)	23.7% (88)	30.4% (113)	372
No discount	33.7% (134)	12.8% (51)	26.9% (107)	26.6% (106)	398

**How much do you agree or disagree with the following options for homes that are unoccupied and unfurnished?**



Only eight people who answered the question indicated that they receive a council tax discount because they have an empty property, which is a very small number and not statistically significant. However, their responses did differ from those who don't receive a council tax discount because of an empty property. Those who do receive a council tax discount were much more in favour of keeping the 100% discount for three months (87.5% agreed) than those who don't receive a council tax discount (31.0% agreed). Also, 87.5% of those who do receive a council tax discount, disagreed with no discount, compared with 52.6% of those who don't receive a council tax discount.

**Responses to question 9 split by all respondents, those receiving council tax discount because of an empty property and those not receiving council tax discount because of an empty property**



**Section two summary table**

Council tax discounts and exemptions	Majority of respondents agreed with	Majority of respondents disagreed with
Homes that are having major repairs or structural alterations done to them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A 50% council tax discount for six months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A 50% council tax discount for 12 months (as it is now)</li> <li>40% discount for 12 months</li> <li>100% discount for one month</li> <li>No discount</li> </ul>
Homes that are unoccupied and unfurnished		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100% discount for three months (as now)</li> <li>100% discount for two months</li> <li>100% discount for one month</li> <li>No discount</li> </ul>

## Appendix A. Copy of the letter sent to those receiving Council Tax Support

**RUSHMOOR**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Council Offices, Farnborough Road,  
Farnborough, Hants. GU14 7JU  
Tel: (01252) 398 399

Website: [www.rushmoor.gov.uk](http://www.rushmoor.gov.uk)

Your reference:

Contact: Benefit Team

Our reference:

Direct line: 01252 398914

e-mail: [benefits@rushmoor.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@rushmoor.gov.uk)

Date: 03 November 2017

### **Council tax support scheme and council tax discounts 2018/19 – please give us your views**

We provide help to people on a low income who need a hand paying their council tax bill. This help is known as council tax support.

We have a duty to make sure we are targeting such support where it is needed most.

We also have a duty to balance the cost of the council tax support scheme against that of delivering key services around the borough.

For this reason, we need to make sure our council tax support scheme is fair to all council tax payers.

Therefore, we are considering a number of options to change the scheme that will start on 1 April 2018.

These options include changes to the minimum amount of council tax residents must pay and to the rules around how many children we will take into account when we calculate council tax support.

At the same time, we are also looking at the discounts we offer on properties that are empty and unfurnished in the short-term, or empty because major work or structural alterations are being carried on them.

Before we make any decisions, we'd like to know your views. You can tell us what you think by filling in our survey at [www.rushmoor.gov.uk/counciltaxsurvey](http://www.rushmoor.gov.uk/counciltaxsurvey)

If you don't have access to the internet, we can send you a paper copy of the survey.

Chief Executive Paul Shackley

Corporate Director Ian Harrison

Corporate Director Karen Edwards

[customerservices@rushmoor.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@rushmoor.gov.uk)

[www.rushmoor.gov.uk](http://www.rushmoor.gov.uk)

DX122250 FARNBOROUGH 2

As everyone pays council tax and any changes may affect other services, we are interested in everyone's views, whether or not they currently receive council tax support or a council tax discount.

If you have any queries, would like help filling out the survey, or would like a paper copy, please contact our Benefit team on 01252 398914

The closing date for taking part in the survey is Sunday 17 December. Any changes will start on 1 April 2018.

Thank you for your time – your views are important to us.

Councillor Gareth Lyon

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gareth Lyon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cabinet member for Concessions and Community Support

## Appendix B. Copy of the letter sent to those who have received a Council Tax discount in the past 5 years

**RUSHMOOR**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Council Offices, Farnborough Road,  
Farnborough, Hants. GU14 7JU  
Tel: (01252) 398 399

Website: [www.rushmoor.gov.uk](http://www.rushmoor.gov.uk)

Your reference:

Contact: Council Tax Team

Our reference:

Direct line: 01252 398912

e-mail: [localtax@rushmoor.gov.uk](mailto:localtax@rushmoor.gov.uk)

Date: 03 November 2017

### Council tax discounts and council tax support scheme 2018/19 – please give us your views

We want to bring empty properties back into use so there is a good supply of homes for local people, and to stop them becoming derelict or a target for antisocial behaviour.

We are therefore reviewing the discounts we offer on properties that are empty and unfurnished, either in the short-term or because major repair work or structural alterations are being carried out on them.

We are considering a number of options for these discounts, but before we make any decisions, we would like to know your views, as someone who has received, or is receiving, a discount - as an owner, or a letting agent on behalf of a client.

You can tell us what you think by filling in our survey at [www.rushmoor.gov.uk/counciltaxsurvey](http://www.rushmoor.gov.uk/counciltaxsurvey)

As well as consulting on options to change our council tax discounts, we are also asking for views on proposals for our council tax support scheme for 2018/19. Council tax support provides help to people on a low income who need a hand paying their council tax bill.

Like all councils, we continue to face reductions in our funding, so we must make sure our council tax support scheme is affordable and fair to all council tax payers.

You will therefore find questions on the options to change our council tax support scheme as part of the survey.

As everyone pays council tax and any changes may affect other services, we are interested in everyone's views, whether or not they currently receive council tax support or a council tax discount.

Chief Executive Paul Shackley

Corporate Director Ian Harrison

Corporate Director Karen Edwards

[customerservices@rushmoor.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@rushmoor.gov.uk)

[www.rushmoor.gov.uk](http://www.rushmoor.gov.uk)

DX122250 FARNBOROUGH 2

If you have any queries, would like help filling out the survey, or would like a paper copy, please contact our Council Tax team on 01252 398912.

The closing date for taking part in the survey is Sunday 17 December. Any changes will start on 1 April 2018.

Thank you for your time – your views are important to us.

Councillor Gareth Lyon

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gareth Lyon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cabinet member for Concessions and Community Support

## Appendix C. Copy of paper survey

# Council tax support and council tax discounts 2018/19

## We want your views

We provide help to people on a low income, who need a hand paying their council tax bill. This help is known as council tax support and we target this support where it is needed most.

Like all councils, we continue to face reductions in our funding, so we must make sure our council tax support scheme is affordable and fair to all council tax payers.

We have therefore been reviewing our council tax support scheme for 2018/19 and would like your views on the options we are considering.

At the same time, we are also looking at the discounts we offer on properties that are empty and unfurnished in the short-term, or empty because major work or structural alterations are being carried on them.

Before we make any decisions, we'd like to know your views. You can tell us what you think by filling in our survey.

As everyone pays council tax and any changes may affect other services, your views matter, whether or not you receive council tax support or a discount.

You can also fill this survey in at  
[www.rushmoor.gov.uk/counciltaxsurvey](http://www.rushmoor.gov.uk/counciltaxsurvey)

The closing date is **Sunday 17 December**

**RUSHMOOR**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Section one - Council tax support

Council tax support is a means-tested discount that we provide for people on low incomes who need help paying their council tax. We don't pay any money to the people who claim it. Instead, we reduce their council tax bill by the amount of support they are entitled to.

At the moment, everyone of working age who receives council tax support pays a minimum of 10% towards their council tax bill. This means they get a 90% discount on their council tax.

Pensioners on a low income do not pay anything.

Because we recognise that sometimes people can end up in severe financial difficulty, we also have an exceptional hardship fund as a safety net for residents, who are genuinely struggling to pay their bill.

## Options for council tax support for 2018/19

We have been looking at the following options for 2018/19 and would like your views. Any changes would start on 1 April 2018 and would only affect people of working age.

---

### Option one:

#### **Increase the minimum amount of council tax that working age people pay from 10% (90% discount).**

We are considering the possibility of increasing the minimum amount of council tax that people of working age have to pay from 10% (90% discount).

When we've looked at what other councils charge, the 10% (90% discount) minimum is at the lower end of charges and our current council tax collection rates are good.

We are therefore looking at a number of options, ranging from charging a minimum of 12% (88% discount) to a minimum of 25% (75% discount).

Increasing the minimum amount people must pay reduces the cost to the council of our council tax support scheme, freeing up money for other services.

The main impact is that households on a low income would have to pay more towards their council tax. We may also have to spend more on recovering unpaid bills.



### What the increased minimum would mean to a Band C working age household

The following table shows how much a working age household living in a Band C property pays a year at a minimum of 10% (90% discount) and how much it would be with an increased minimum payment. The figures are based on the 2017/18 council tax bill.

	Current minimum payment - 10% (90% discount)	12% minimum payment (88% discount)	15% minimum payment (85% discount)	18% minimum payment (82% discount)	20% minimum payment (80% discount)	25% minimum payment (75% discount)
<b>Couple</b>	£138.24	£165.88	£207.35	£248.82	£276.47	£345.59
<b>Single person (with 25% discount)</b>	£103.68	£124.41	£155.51	£186.62	£207.35	£259.19

### How much an increased minimum would save

	12% minimum payment (88% discount)	15% minimum payment (85% discount)	18% minimum payment (82% discount)	20% minimum payment (80% discount)	25% minimum payment (75% discount)
<b>Total saving</b>	£52,781	£130,460	£207,878	£259,343	£387,391

As council tax goes to pay for services that we provide, along with Hampshire County Council, the police and the fire and rescue service, any savings would be split between the four. Overall, 72% of the savings would go to the county council, 13% to us, 11% to the police and 4% to the fire and rescue service.

#### Question 1

**How much do you agree or disagree that we should increase the minimum amount of council tax that working age people have to pay by the following options?**

(Please tick one for each option)

Minimum amount	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12% (88% discount)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15% (85% discount)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18% (82% discount)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20% (80% discount)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25% (75% discount)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Question 2

If you think the minimum amount should be higher or lower, please tell us what amount you think it should be. (Please write in)

---

#### Option two: To exclude the new bereavement support payment when we calculate council tax support.

If you are of working age and claiming benefits and your partner dies, you can get a bereavement support payment from the government. This is an additional payment to help towards extra costs at this tough time.

We are proposing to exclude this payment when we work out how much council tax support you are entitled to. We already do this for housing benefit.

Doing this will help someone who has recently lost a partner because getting this extra payment won't affect the level of support you are entitled to. It also brings our council tax support scheme in line with the housing benefit scheme, making it easier to administer.

### Question 3

How much do you agree or disagree that we should exclude the new bereavement support payment when we calculate council tax support? (Please tick one)

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

---

#### Option three: Limit the number of dependent children to two when we calculate council tax support.

At the moment, we take into account the number of children you have when we calculate how much council tax support you can get. For each child you have, this amounts to an additional £66.90 a week in your applicable amount and there is no limit on the number of children included. So, for each child you have, you earn £66.90 in income without any reduction in support.

In April, the government changed the rules covering Universal Credit, housing benefit and Tax Credits so that if you already have two children, it would not include any additional children born after 1 April 2017 in its calculations. There are some exceptions, like multiple births, adopted children and when households merge.

We are considering applying this rule to council tax support for children born after 1 April 2018. Any existing claims would be protected unless there is a break in your claim. Doing this would bring council tax support in line with the other benefits and make it simple to apply.

The main impact is that if you have a third or subsequent child after 1 April 2018, you may get less council tax support than someone who has another child before that date.

#### Question 4

**How much do you agree or disagree that we should limit the number of dependent children to two when we calculate council tax support?** (Please tick one)

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

---

#### Option four:

#### Other ways of meeting the shortfall in the council's funding.

Instead of changing our council tax support scheme, we could look at other ways of saving money to meet the shortfall. These are:

- Increase council tax overall
- Reduce spending on other services or increase income
- Use council reserves

We'd like your views on these options.

#### Question 5

**How much do you agree or disagree that we should increase council tax to meet the shortfall?** (Please tick one)

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

#### Question 6

**a) How much do you agree or disagree that we should reduce spending on other services or increase income to meet the shortfall?** (Please tick one)

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

**b) If you answered strongly agree or agree, please tell us how you think we could reduce spending or increase income.** (Please write in)


**Question 7**

**How much do you agree or disagree that we should use council reserves to meet the shortfall?** (Please tick one)

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

**Section two - council tax discounts and exemptions for 2018/19**

We are also reviewing what council tax discount and exemptions we should offer on empty homes. These are properties that are empty because they are:

- Having major repairs or structural alterations done to them
- Unoccupied and unfurnished

Our aim is to bring empty homes back into use so there is a good supply of homes for local people, and to stop them becoming derelict or a target for antisocial behaviour.

We would also like your views on these discounts and exemptions.

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**Homes that are having major repairs or structural alterations done to them**

At the moment, if you are carrying out major repairs or structural alterations to a property, we will give you a 50% discount on the property for 12 months to encourage you to complete the work.

We are considering a number of options, ranging from carrying on with the current scheme to removing the discount completely.

The table below shows an estimate of how much the discount would cost a year and the annual saving. As with council tax support, this saving would be divided between Hampshire County Council (72%), ourselves (13%), the police (11%) and fire and rescue service (4%).

Discount option	Annual cost of scheme	Annual saving
50% discount for 12 months (as now)	£30,178	None
50% discount for six months	£15,089	£15,089
40% discount for 12 months	£27,160	£3,018
100% discount for one month	£5,030	£25,148
No discount	None	£30,178

### Question 8

**How much do you agree or disagree with the following options for homes that are having major repairs or structural alterations done to them?** (Please tick one for each option)

Discount option	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
50% discount for 12 months (as now)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
50% discount for six months	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
40% discount for 12 months	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
100% discount for one month	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
No discount	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Homes that are unoccupied and unfurnished

We offer a discount in council tax for up to three months for homes that are unoccupied and unfurnished. The main reason for doing this is that it supports landlords, who would otherwise have to pick up council tax costs between tenancies.

We are considering options ranging from keeping the current discount to removing the discount completely.

The table below shows an estimate of how much the discount would cost a year and the annual saving. This saving would be divided between Hampshire County Council, ourselves, the police and fire and rescue service.

Discount option	Annual cost of scheme	Annual saving
100% discount for three months (as now)	£344,161	None
100% discount for two months	£229,440	£114,721
100% discount for one month	£114,720	£229,441
No discount	None	£344,161

### Question 9

How much do you agree or disagree with the following options for homes that are unoccupied and unfurnished? (Please tick one for each option)

Discount option	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
100% discount for three months (as now)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
100% discount for two months	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
100% discount for one month	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
No discount	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Section three - about you

### Question 10

Do you receive council tax support?

Yes  No  Don't know

### Question 11

Do you receive a council tax discount because you have an empty property?

Yes  No  Don't know

If yes, please tell us what discount you receive.

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As part of the Equalities Act 2010, we must make sure our services are open and accessible to everyone, that we treat people fairly and appropriately and in consultations, we hear all views.

The following questions will help us to check that we are doing this and will also help us to understand better the answers we receive. We will treat this information as anonymous and confidential and will not identify individuals.

You do not have to answer these questions if you would prefer not to.

**Question 12**

**Which one of the following age bands do you belong to?** (Please tick one)

- Under 16 years       35 - 44 years       65 - 74 years       I'd prefer not to say
- 16 - 24 years       45 - 54 years       75 - 84 years
- 25 - 34 years       55 - 64 years       85+ years

**Question 13**

**What is your gender?**

- Male       Female       I'd prefer not to say

**Question 14**

**What is your ethnic group?** (Please tick one)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> White - British                   | <input type="radio"/> Asian or British Asian - Pakistani          |
| <input type="radio"/> White - Irish                     | <input type="radio"/> Asian or British Asian - Bangladeshi        |
| <input type="radio"/> White - Gypsy/Traveller           | <input type="radio"/> Asian or British Asian - Chinese            |
| <input type="radio"/> White - other                     | <input type="radio"/> Asian - other                               |
| <input type="radio"/> Mixed - white and black Caribbean | <input type="radio"/> Black or British Black - Caribbean          |
| <input type="radio"/> Mixed - white and black African   | <input type="radio"/> Black or British Black - African            |
| <input type="radio"/> Mixed - white and Asian           | <input type="radio"/> Black - other                               |
| <input type="radio"/> Mixed - other                     | <input type="radio"/> I'd prefer not to say                       |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian or British Asian - Nepali   | <input type="radio"/> Any other background (please specify below) |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian or British Asian - Indian   | <input type="text"/>  |

**Question 15**

**Do you consider yourself to have any health conditions or disabilities, which limit your daily activities?** (Please tick one)

- Yes       No       I'd prefer not to say

**Question 16**

**What is your postcode?**

**Question 17**

**If you would like to be kept informed about the outcome of this consultation and our decision, please give us your email address.**

**Question 18**

**a) Occasionally, we'd like to send our residents information about the council and our services by email. You can also find out about council consultations. In addition, our council Leader, Councillor David Clifford has his own email newsletter that you can sign up to receive.**

- I'd like to receive news from the council
- I'd like to receive news about consultations
- I'd like to receive news from the Leader

**b) What is your email address?** (if not given, or different to, above)

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**Thank you for taking part in our survey.  
Our councillors will use your responses  
to help them make a decision.**

**We will publish updates on our website,  
[www.rushmoor.gov.uk/counciltaxsurvey](http://www.rushmoor.gov.uk/counciltaxsurvey)**

Data protection notice: We will only use the information you give us for the purposes stated in this survey.