

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2019/20

SUMMARY:

This report sets out the results of the recent public consultation exercise regarding changes to the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme and describes the Council's Council Tax Support Task and Finish Group's considerations and recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Cabinet recommend to Council the following changes to its Council Tax Support Scheme for 2019/20, to be effective from 1st April 2019:

- To increase the minimum contribution for Council Tax Support customers of working age to 15%, and
- To enhance the budget provision for the Exceptional Hardship Fund from £10,000 to £12,000 to mitigate any increase in hardship

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 On the 11th December 2018, Cabinet gave approval to undertake a public consultation exercise in respect of the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme (CTSS) on two options:

▪ **Option 1:**

To increase in the minimum contribution for working age residents of CTS from 12% to 15%

▪ **Option 2:**

To seek views on other ways of meeting the ongoing shortfall in the Council's funding

1.2 The 2,555 working age residents who receive CTS were sent letters, informing them of the survey and providing the link to the online survey. Paper copies were also made available at the Council Offices and Citizen Advice Rushmoor.

1.3 The survey was also promoted via the Council's website and social media (Facebook and Twitter). Details of the survey were also sent to 4,306 people who had signed up to email news or for information about consultations from Rushmoor Borough Council.

1.4 The survey ran from the 12th December 2018 until the 16th January 2019.

1.5 The full report of the survey is attached as Appendix 1.

2. FURTHER BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Council Tax Support Task and Finish Group (formally known as the Welfare Reform Task and Finish Group), has been monitoring the effects of welfare reform changes for those residents in receipt of support since 2013/14, and have since then, recommended changes to the Council's scheme from year to year.
- 2.2 Rushmoor's scheme has proved effective and Council Tax collection rates remain high (98% in 2017/18, slightly down from 98.1% in 2016/17). Those in receipt of CTS are generally meeting their Council Tax liabilities albeit the collection rate within the CTS group is lower than across the whole of the Borough.
- 2.3 Prior to recommending a consultation exercise, the Group had weighed up a number of factors for changes to the scheme for 2019/20 and paid specific attention to the following matters during their discussions:
- a) Current collection rate for Council Tax payment in Rushmoor amongst CTS recipients
 - b) How collection rates compare in Rushmoor this year to previous years
 - c) How collection rates compare in Rushmoor to other similar local authorities
 - d) How Rushmoor's current CTS compares to other similar local authorities
 - e) How customers are being affected by changes to other welfare arrangements, particularly Universal Credit (UC)
 - f) Whether other changes within the boarder welfare system required reflection within Rushmoor's CTS
 - g) Other general economic indicators
- 2.4 Data to support considerations in 2.3 above, was submitted to Cabinet as an appendix to report previously presented on 11th December 2018 - <https://democracy.rushmoor.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=138&MId=543&Ver=4>

3. SUMMARY RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION EXERCISE

- 3.1 In total, 392 surveys were returned (391 online and one paper survey). Of this number:
- 73 respondents (18.6%) identified themselves as being in receipt of CTS
 - 242 respondents (61.7%) identified themselves as not being in receipt of CTS
 - Three respondents didn't know whether they were in receipt of CTS
 - 74 respondents did not answer that question
- 3.2 Page 8 of Appendix 1 sets out the response to the key question as to the degree that respondents support the move from 12% minimum contribution to 15%. Whilst the report sets out the detail, in summary, 56.7% of all who responded agreed with the proposal for change, as opposed to 43.3% who

disagreed. There is a considerable disparity between the views of those in receipt of CTS (who disagree with the proposal – 81.7% against as opposed 18.3% for) and of those not in receipt of CTS (who agree with the proposal – 66% for as opposed to 34% against).

- 3.3 There are a number of other questions in the Consultation document which consider the degree to which residents would deal with financial shortfalls in other ways. The report highlights that there is not support for a general increase of Council Tax or reduction in other Council service areas, however, a majority of respondents (58% to 42%) do favour the Council increasing other income and a further majority of respondents (69% to 31%) also favour the Council using reserves to meet financial shortfalls.

4. CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT TASK AND FINISH GROUP

- 4.1 At their meeting on Monday 21st January, the Group gave considerable thought to the consultation response. The Group feel that in light of the response, Cabinet should consider recommending to Council that the minimum contribution for working age recipients of CTS be increased from 12% to 15% for the 2019/20 financial year.

- 4.2 The Group considered the potential financial impact on those who will be directly affected, taking into account a modelling scenario, which is attached as Appendix 2. This modelling scenario looks at the current actual numbers receiving CTS and the Council Tax Bands that their properties are in and assesses the financial effect based upon assumptions in increases in Council Tax that Rushmoor and other preceptors will most likely set according to the best information available at the present time.

- 4.3 In light of the recommendation to increase charges, the Group were keen to mitigate any unforeseen hardship that this may cause and therefore, also recommend to Cabinet that the Hardship Fund be increased by £2,000 pa with effect from the 2019/20 financial year.

- 4.4 The Group further recommends that should the changes recommended be adopted, further monitoring should continue during 2019/20 to assess the actual impact.

- 4.5 The recommendations of the Group are the majority, but not unanimous view of the Group.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 The Council is required to consider an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for changes to services and an updated EIA that reflects the recommendations in this report, is attached at Appendix 3. The EIA sets out the key issues and mitigations surrounding the proposals to change the scheme.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.2 The proposed changes potentially generate an additional £94,182.00 in Council Tax receipts on an ongoing basis, to be shared amongst preceptors (circa £10,360 to Rushmoor). The provision to increase the Hardship Fund potentially presents an additional cost of £2,000 pa in the event this is taken up. At this stage, no further resource implications are anticipated.

Legal Implications

- 5.3 There are no additional legal implications resulting from this report. The Council is required to fix its scheme by the 11th March in each year and to undertake consultation in respect of any proposed changes. The recommendations as they stand would enable both of these counts to be satisfied.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Following careful analysis of the CTSS, by the Council Tax Support Task and Finish Group and a subsequent public consultation exercise, the Cabinet should make recommendations to the Council as set out at the head of this report.

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**COUNCIL SERVICES AND COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT
WE WANT YOUR VIEWS**

Consultation report by Strategy, Performance and Partnerships

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Summary

Rushmoor Borough Council has been reviewing its Council Tax Support Scheme for 2019/20 and consulted on two options:

- **Option 1 - Working age residents have to pay at least 15% towards their Council Tax (85% discount), instead of the current 12% (88% discount)**
- **Option 2 - other ways of meeting the ongoing shortfall in the Council's funding**

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 did not receive Council Tax Support.

Option 1

Overall, respondents agreed with Option 1, which was to raise the percentage working age residents on Council Tax Support pay towards their Council Tax, from 12% to 15%. However, those receiving Council Tax Support disagreed with the increase.

Option 2

Four other ways of meeting the ongoing shortfall in funding were consulted on:

- Respondents disagreed with raising Council Tax to meet the ongoing shortfall in the Council's funding.
- Respondents disagreed with reducing spending on other services to meet the ongoing shortfall in the Council's funding.
- Respondents agreed with the Council increasing income to meet the ongoing shortfall in the Council's funding.
- Respondents agreed with using Council reserves to meet the ongoing shortfall in the Council's funding.

Introduction

Rushmoor Borough Council provides a wide range of services to residents and businesses in Aldershot and Farnborough, including bin collections, street cleaning, parks and leisure facilities, planning, support to businesses and town centre regeneration. Council Tax is one of the ways in which Rushmoor pays for these services and makes up about 10% of total Council funding. The rest comes from grants, business rates, commercial rents, fees, charges and interest.

Out of the total Council Tax bill paid by residents, Rushmoor Borough Council get just over 12% of the amount. The rest goes to Hampshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and Hampshire Fire and Rescue to pay for the services they provide.

Like other Councils, Rushmoor continues to face a shortfall in funding. As such the survey was designed to collect views on two things:

- How much, if at all, the Council should change the Council Tax Support scheme to help meet this ongoing shortfall in funding.
- How else the Council could meet the ongoing funding shortfall

About Council Tax Support

Rushmoor Borough Council offers help to people who need help paying their Council Tax bill. This help is known as Council Tax Support and it goes to the people who need it most.

If a resident gets Council Tax Support, they are given a discount on the amount of Council Tax they have to pay.

Rushmoor have been looking at the Council Tax Support Scheme for the year beginning 1 April 2019 and consulted on the following two options:

Option 1 – Working age residents have to pay at least 15% towards their Council Tax (85% discount), instead of the current 12% (88% discount).

Option 2 - Other ways of meeting the ongoing shortfall in the Council's funding.

Methodology

The 2,555 working age residents who receive Council Tax Support were sent letters (Appendix A), 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 B) 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 4,306 people who had signed up to email news or for information about consultations from Rushmoor Borough Council.

The survey ran from Wednesday 12 December 2018 until Wednesday 16 January 2019.

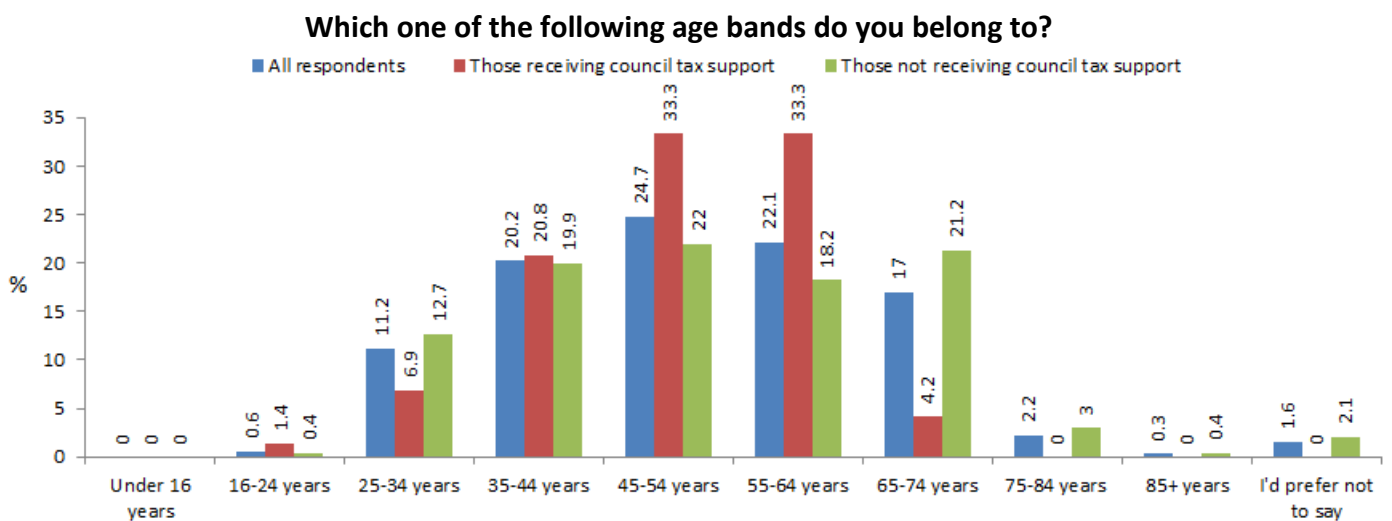
Responses

In total, there were 392 surveys returned (391 online and one paper survey). 73 respondents (18.6%) identified themselves as being in receipt of Council Tax Support and 242 respondents (61.7%) identified themselves as not being in receipt of Council Tax Support. Three respondents did not know whether they were in receipt of Council Tax Support and 74 respondents skipped the question.

Characteristics of the respondents

Age

In total 312 respondents completed this question. 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 95.7% of those who indicated that they received Council Tax Support being between the ages of 16-64, compared with 73.2% of those not receiving Council Tax Support.



Gender

In total 310 respondents completed this question. Overall, 48.1% of respondents were female and 47.4% were male (4.5% preferred not to say). However, 59.7% of those on Council Tax Support indicated they were female, compared to 44.9% of those not on Council Tax Support.

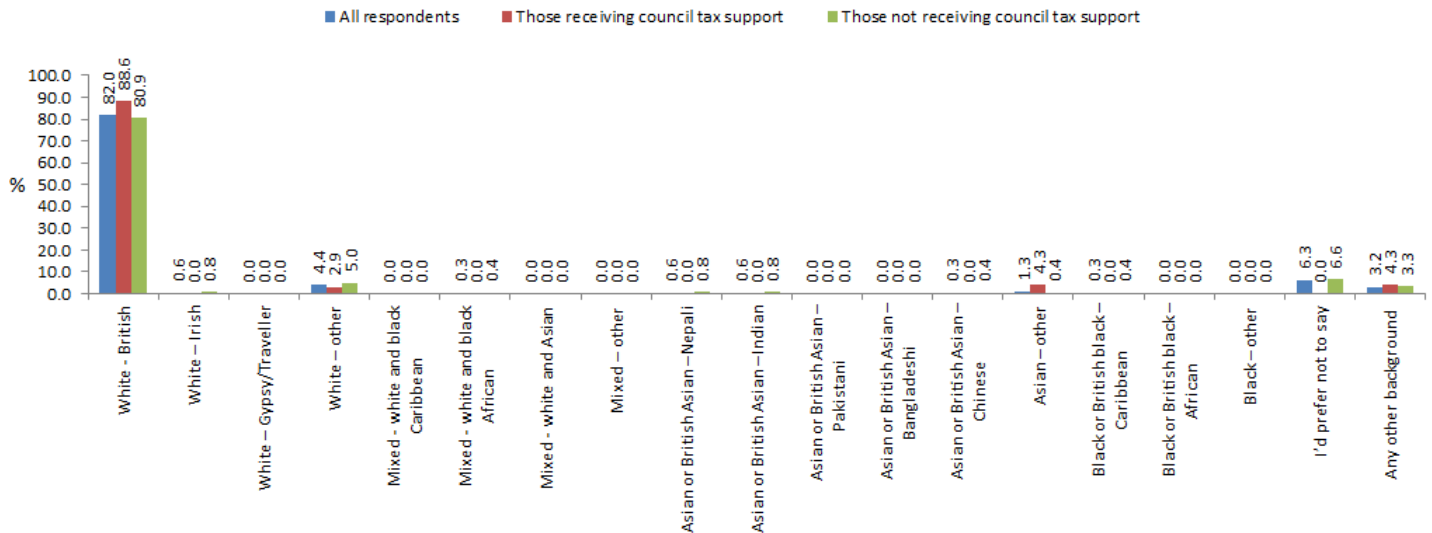
Your gender



Ethnic group

In total 317 respondents completed this question. The largest ethnic group completing the survey identified as white-British. Overall, 82.0% (260) of respondents identified as white-British. A slightly higher percentage of those receiving Council Tax Support identified as white-British (88.6% - 62 respondents) and a slightly higher percentage of respondents identified as Asian-other (4.3% - three respondents), compared to those not receiving Council Tax Support where 80.9% (195 respondents) identified as white-British and 0.4% (one respondent) identified as Asian-other. However, the number of those answering this who were receiving Council Tax Support was low so the difference may not be significant.

What is your ethnic group?



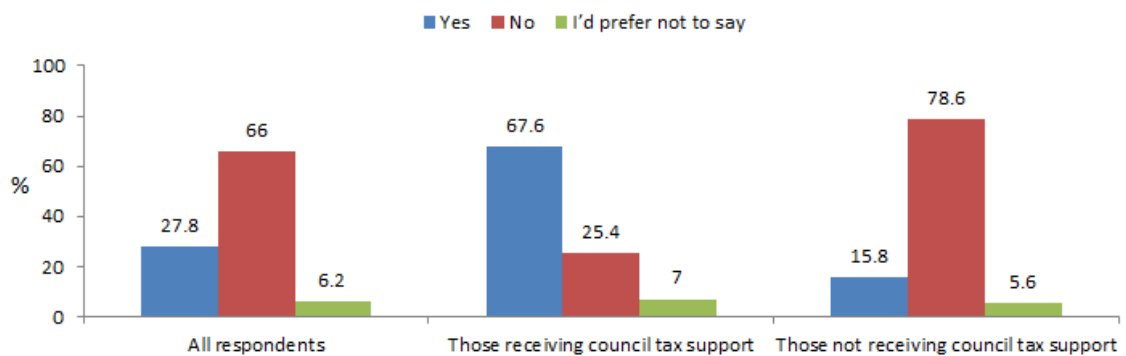
Of the 10 people who completed the any other background section of the question, six indicated that they were English or white-English, one indicated that they were white-European and one indicated they were Arab. The other two responses were:

- Why ask this racist question
- This is an irrelevant question

Health conditions or disabilities

In total 295 respondents completed this question. Overall, 27.9% of respondents indicated that they had a health conditions or disabilities, which limited their daily activities. However, 66.7% of those on Council Tax Support indicated they had a health conditions or disabilities, which limited their daily activities, compared to only 16.3% of those not on Council Tax Support.

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



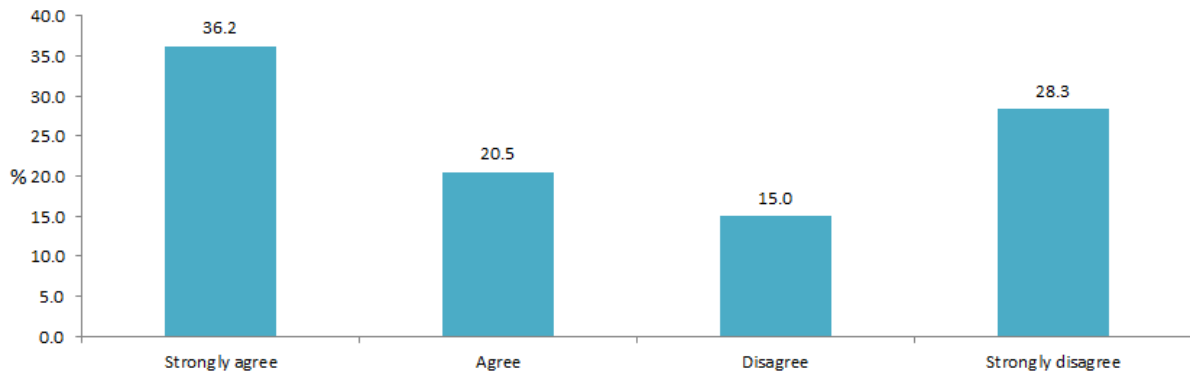
Results

Option 1 – Working age residents have to pay at least 15% towards their Council Tax (85% discount), instead of the current 12% (88% discount).

Question 1. How much do you agree or disagree that working age residents should have to pay at least 15% towards their Council Tax (85% discount), instead of the current 12% (88% discount)?

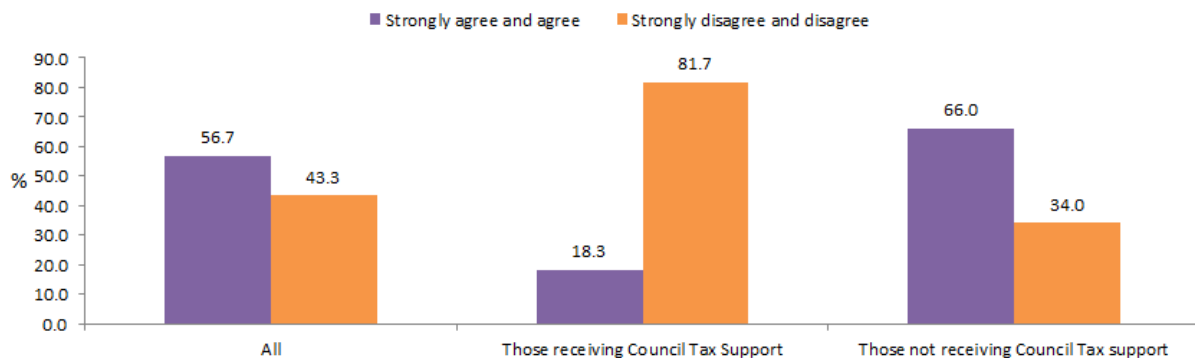
There were 381 valid responses to this question, excluding the 11 who responded 'Don't know'. Overall, 57.6% (216 respondents) agreed and strongly agreed that working age residents should have to pay at least 15% towards their council tax (85% discount), instead of the current 12% (88% discount).

How much do you agree or disagree that working age residents should have to pay at least 15% towards their Council Tax (85% discount), instead of the current 12% (88% discount)?



There was a difference between those who receive Council Tax Support and those who do not. 81.7% (58 respondents) of those receiving Council Tax Support disagreed and strongly disagreed with the increase. Whereas, those not receiving Council Tax Support generally agreed with the increase, with 66.0% (154 respondents) agreeing and strongly agreeing.

Percentage of respondents that agreed or disagreed that working age residents should have to pay at least 15% towards their Council Tax (85% discount), instead of the current 12% (88% discount)

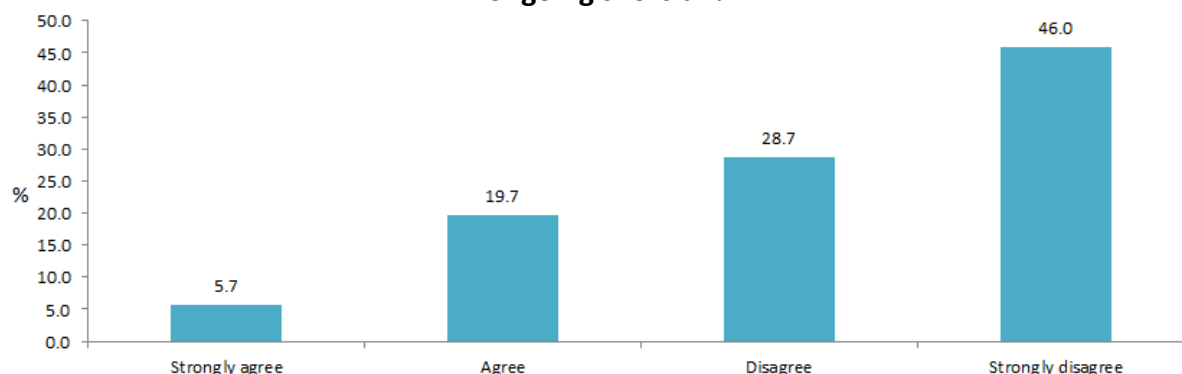


Option 2 - other ways of meeting the ongoing shortfall in our funding

Question 2. How much do you agree or disagree that we should increase Council Tax to meet the ongoing shortfall?

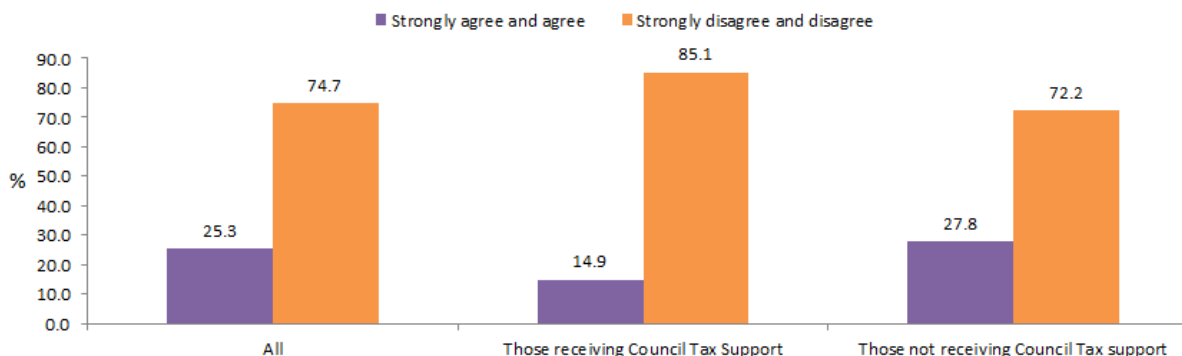
There were 300 valid responses to this question, excluding the 23 who responded 'Don't know'. Overall, 74.7% (224 respondents) disagreed and strongly disagreed that the Council should increase Council Tax to meet the ongoing shortfall

How much do you agree or disagree that we should increase Council Tax to meet the ongoing shortfall?



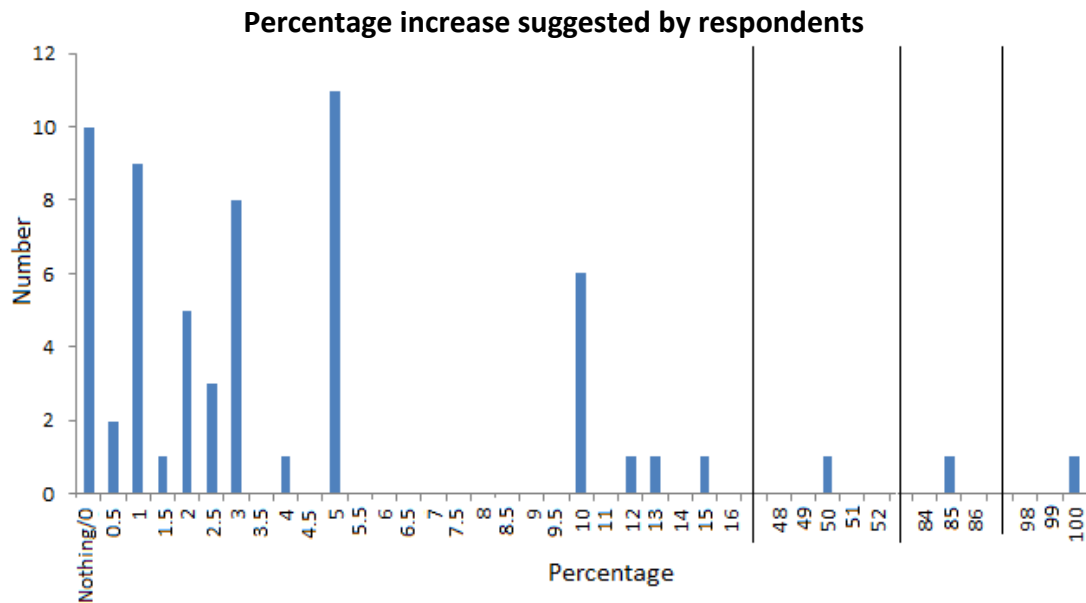
A higher percentage of those receiving Council Tax Support disagreed with a Council Tax increase than those who don't. 85.1% (57 respondents) of those receiving Council Tax support disagreed and strongly disagreed with the increase, compared to 72.2% (164 respondents) of those not receiving Council Tax Support.

Percentage of respondents that agreed or disagreed that the Council should increase Council Tax to meet the ongoing shortfall



Question 3. If you answered agree or strongly agree, how much, as a percentage, do you think we could increase our share of the Council Tax by?

In total 95 respondents completed in this question. The table below shows data from the 62 responses that included individual percentages. The percentages varied but tended to be at the lower end of the scale, with the most popular percentage rise being 5% (11 respondents suggested this).

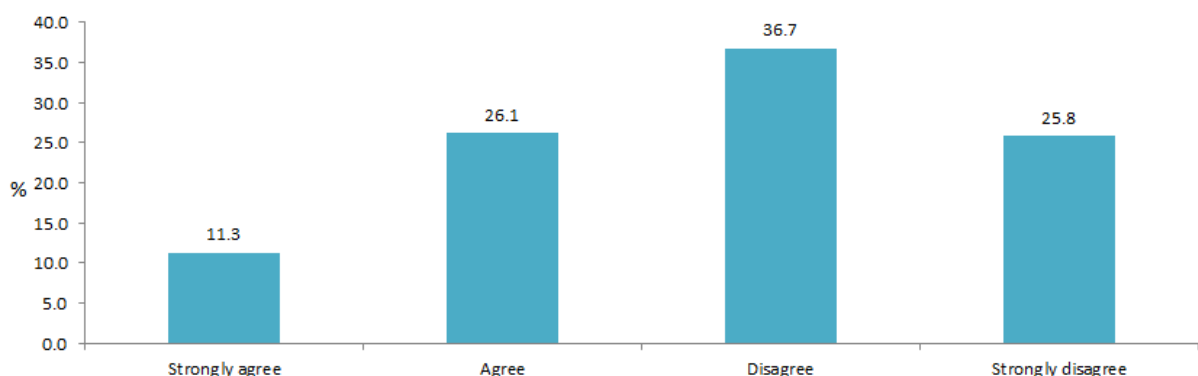


The other responses varied and were very individual. However, there were a few which were similar, four respondents suggested that it should be in line with inflation, four respondents answered with a range of percentages (3-5%, 15-16%, 15-20% and 20-25%), two respondents suggested higher bands should pay more and two respondents suggested the rise should be kept to a minimum.

Q4. How much do you agree or disagree that we should reduce spending on other services to meet the ongoing shortfall?

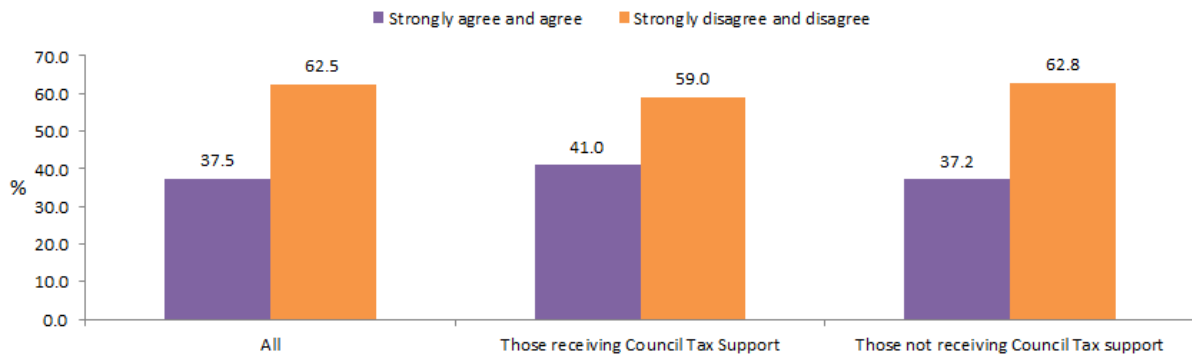
There were 283 valid responses to this question, excluding the 37 who responded ‘Don’t know’. Overall, 62.5% (177 respondents) disagreed and strongly disagreed that the Council should reduce spending on other services to meet the ongoing shortfall.

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



There was no significant difference in response from those receiving Council Tax Support and those who do not. 59.0% (36 respondents) of those receiving Council Tax Support disagreed and strongly disagreed and 62.8% (137 respondents) of those not receiving Council Tax Support also disagreed and strongly disagreed.

Percentage of respondents that agreed or disagreed that the Council should reduce spending on other services to meet the ongoing shortfall



Q5. If you answered agree or strongly agree, please tell us how you think we could reduce spending

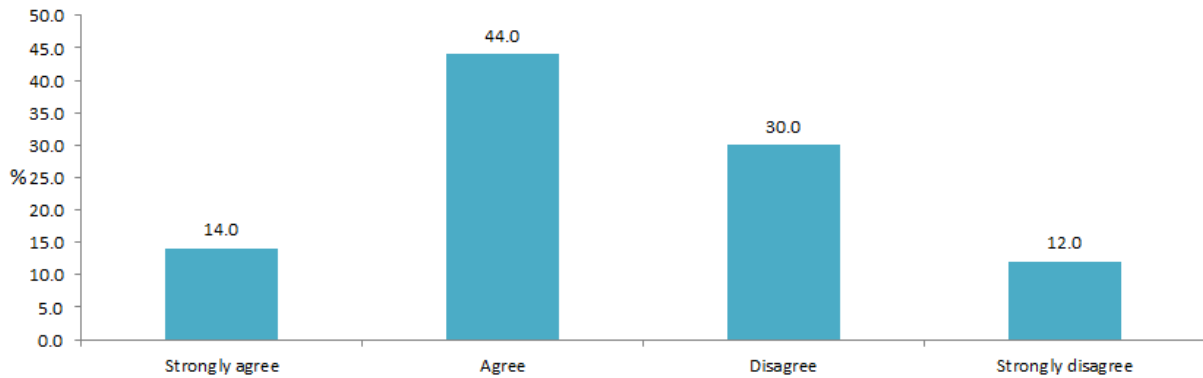
In total 95 respondents filled in this question the main themes of the comments were (all those mentioned 5 or more times):

- A theme around Council staff including reduce staffing and/or staff wages and/or don't increase staff wages (mentioned in 21 comments)
- A theme around wastage and efficiency including reduce wastage at the Council and/or more efficiency (mentioned in 9 comments)
- A theme around Councillors including reduce Councillors and/or Councillor expenses (mentioned in 10 comments)
- A theme around grass and flowers including reduce grass cutting and/or reduce planting of flowers (mentioned in 7 comments)
- A theme around bins including less bin collections and/or fortnightly bin collections (mentioned in 6 comments)
- A theme around contractors including less spending on contractors and/or bring services back in house (mentioned in 5 comments)

Q6. How much do you agree or disagree that we should increase income to meet the ongoing shortfall?

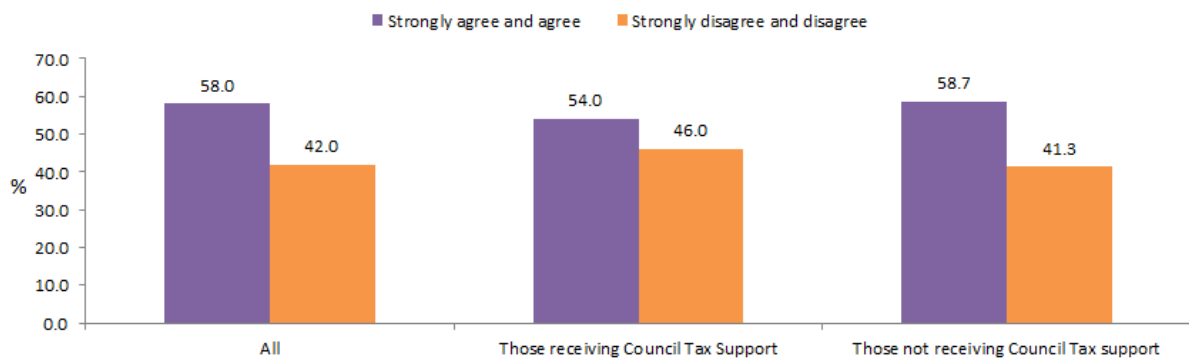
There were 250 valid responses to this question, excluding the 67 who responded 'Don't know'. Overall, 58.0% (145 respondents) agreed and strongly agreed that the Council should increase income to meet the ongoing shortfall.

How much do you agree or disagree that we should increase income to meet the ongoing shortfall?



There was no significant difference in response from those receiving Council Tax Support and those who do not. 54.0% (27 respondents) of those receiving Council Tax Support agreed and agreed strongly that the Council should increase income to meet the ongoing shortfall and 58.7% (115 respondents) of those not receiving Council Tax Support agreed and strongly agreed that the Council should increase income to meet the ongoing shortfall.

Percentage of respondents that agreed or disagreed that the Council should increase income to meet the ongoing shortfall



Q7. If you answered agree or strongly agree, please tell us how you think we could increase income.

In total 107 respondents filled in this question the main themes of the comments were (all those mentioned 5 or more times):

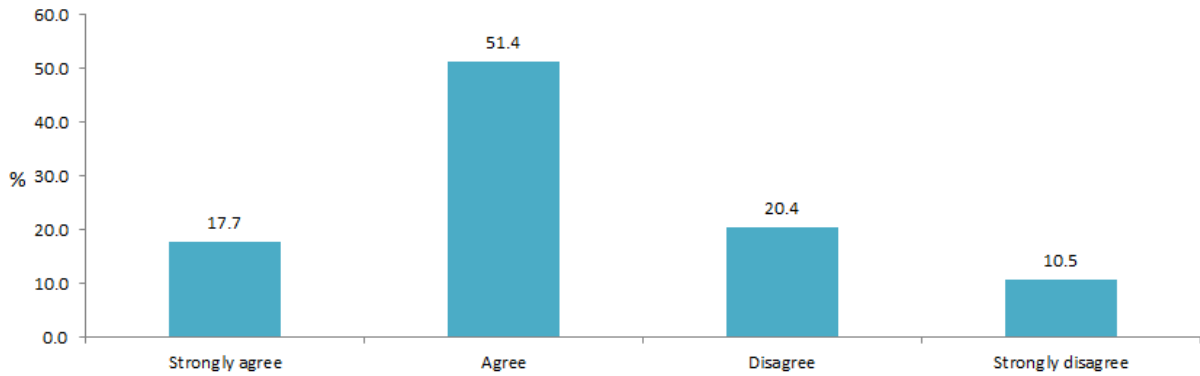
- A theme around parking including increase parking charges and/or increase parking fines and/or introduce parking charges for Council staff at offices (mentioned in 14 comments)
- A theme around charging more for things and/or introduce charges for Council services (mentioned in 12 comments)
- A theme around increasing Council Tax (mentioned in 6 comments)
- A theme around businesses including encouraging more business and/or sort out town centres for businesses and/or reduce business rates (mentioned in 5 comments)
- A theme about working with businesses including more partnership with business and/or sponsorship from businesses (mentioned in 5 comments)

- A theme about Council Tax Support including increase the amount those on Council Tax support pay and/or make pensioners on Council Tax Support pay something too (mentioned in 5 comments)
- A theme around wastage and efficiency including reduce wastage at the Council and/or more efficiency (mentioned in 5 comments)

Q8. How much do you agree or disagree that we should use some Council reserves to meet the ongoing shortfall?

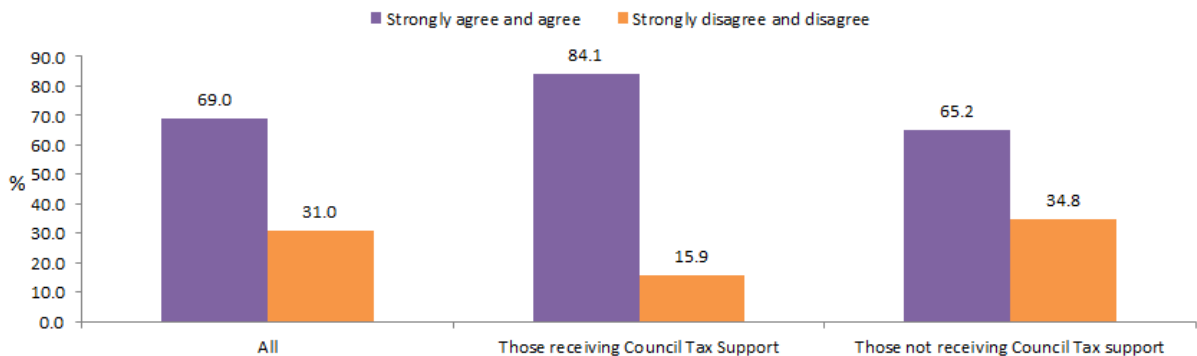
There were 294 valid responses to this question, excluding the 26 who responded ‘Don’t know’. Overall, 69% (203 respondents) agreed and strongly agreed that the Council should use some reserves to meet the ongoing shortfall.

How much do you agree or disagree that we should use some Council reserves to meet the ongoing shortfall?



A higher percentage of those receiving Council Tax Support agreed that the Council should use some reserves to meet the shortfall, than those who do not. 84.1% (53 respondents) of those receiving Council Tax Support agreed and agreed strongly that the Council should use some reserves to meet the ongoing shortfall, compared with 65.2% (146 respondents) of those not receiving Council Tax Support who agreed and agreed strongly that the Council should use some reserves to meet the ongoing shortfall.

Percentage of respondents that agreed or disagreed that the Council should use some Council reserves to meet the ongoing shortfall



Appendices

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

Dear resident

Council services and Council Tax Support Scheme 2019/2020 – please give us your views

The Council is committed to keeping Council Tax low and affordable for everyone, while at the same time, raising funds for essential services that Hampshire County Council, the Police, Fire Service and we provide.

As part of that, we are considering increasing the minimum amount of Council Tax that we ask residents, who receive Council Tax Support, to pay from 12% (88% discount) to 15% (85% discount) from 1 April 2019.

We are also asking for views on some alternatives, including reducing spending, increasing income, using some of the Council's reserves or increasing our share of the Council Tax. We want to hear a wide range of views, so we are asking all Council taxpayers to take part in our consultation.

However, as you currently receive Council Tax Support, we want to make sure we hear your views in particular.

You can tell us what you think by filling in our survey at www.rushmoor.gov.uk/counciltaxsurvey

[The closing date for filling in the survey is Wednesday 16 January.](#)

If you have any queries, would like help filling out the survey, or would like a paper copy, please contact us on 01252 398 914.

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

Councillor Gareth Lyon
Cabinet member for Corporate and Democratic Services

NEPALI NOTICE

IF YOU are Nepali and would like help with this survey, please come to the Council offices and ask to speak to our Nepali speaking customer advisor, or alternatively go to Citizens Advice.

Council services and council tax support 2019/20

We want your views by
Wednesday 16 January

About this survey

We provide a wide range of services to residents and businesses in Aldershot and Farnborough, including bin collections, street cleaning, parks and leisure facilities, planning, support to businesses and town centre regeneration. You can find details of these in our Council Plan, www.rushmoor.gov.uk/councilplan

Council tax is one of the ways in which we pay for these services and makes up about 10% of our total funding. The rest comes from grants, business rates, commercial rents, fees, charges and interest.

Out of your council tax bill, we get just over 12% of the total amount. The rest goes to Hampshire

County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and Hampshire Fire and Rescue to pay for the services they provide. You can find more details about this at www.rushmoor.gov.uk/counciltaxcharges

Like other councils, we continue to face a shortfall in our funding. We'd therefore like to hear your views on two things:

- How much, if at all, we should change our council tax support scheme to help meet this ongoing shortfall in funding
- How else we could meet the ongoing funding shortfall

You can also fill this survey in at
www.rushmoor.gov.uk/counciltaxsurvey

RUSHMOOR
BOROUGH COUNCIL

About council tax support

We offer help to people who don't have much money and need a hand paying their council tax bill.

This help is known as council tax support and it goes to the people who need it most.

If you get council tax support, we don't pay you any money towards your bill, but give you a discount on the amount of council tax you have to pay.

We must make sure our council tax support scheme is affordable – but also fair for all our council tax payers.

To do this, we have been looking at our council tax support scheme for the year beginning 1 April 2019 and would like your views on the options we have been thinking about.

As everyone pays council tax and any changes may affect other services, we'd like to hear from you, whether or not you receive council tax support.

Our current council tax support scheme

At the moment, if you are of working age and receive council tax support, you must pay at least 12% towards your council tax bill. This means you can get a discount of up to 88% on the bill.

If you're a pensioner and don't have much money, you don't have to pay any council tax

Because we know that sometimes people can have severe money problems, we also have an exceptional hardship fund. This is like a safety net for residents, who are genuinely struggling to pay their bill.

Section 1 - council tax support and other funding options for the year beginning 1 April 2019

Option 1: Working age residents have to pay at least 15% towards their council tax (85% discount), instead of the current 12% (88% discount).

We've looked at what other councils do and our current minimum charge of 12% is at the lower end of charges. Other councils like us have set their minimum charges between 15% and 45%.

If we put the minimum amount up to 15%, based on the current charges, a couple paying band C council tax would have to pay an extra £3.65 on their current council tax bill of £14.60 a month.

Overall, based on current numbers, the increase would affect around 2,630 residents in Aldershot and Farnborough and raise around £86,000 in extra council tax, which would help to pay for local services.

As council tax doesn't just pay for Rushmoor Borough Council services, the extra funding would be split, with around £75,500 going to Hampshire County Council, the police and fire and rescue service and we would receive about £10,500.

What this would mean for a band C working age household

| | Yearly bill | | Monthly bill | | Weekly bill | |
|---------|--|---|--|---|--|---|
| | Current minimum payment - 12% (88% discount) | Proposed minimum payment - 15% (85% discount) | Current minimum payment - 12% (88% discount) | Proposed minimum payment - 15% (85% discount) | Current minimum payment - 12% (88% discount) | Proposed minimum payment - 15% (85% discount) |
| Couple | £175.22 | £219.02 | £14.60 | £18.25 | £3.37 | £4.21 |
| Singles | £131.41 | £164.27 | £10.95 | £13.69 | £2.53 | £3.16 |

Question 1

How much do you agree or disagree that working age residents should have to pay at least 15% towards their council tax (85% discount), instead of the current 12% (88% discount)? (Please tick one)

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Option 2: Other ways of meeting the ongoing shortfall in our funding.

As well as considering a change to our council tax support scheme, we could look at other ways of saving money to meet the ongoing shortfall in our funding.

These are:

- Increase our share of the overall council tax bill - currently £198.49 a household for a band D property
- Reduce spending on other services
- Increase income
- Use some council reserves

We would like your views on these options.

Question 2

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

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Question 3

If you answered agree or strongly agree, how much, as a percentage, do you think we could increase our share of the council tax by?

Question 4

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

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Question 5

If you answered agree or strongly agree, please tell us how you think we could reduce spending.

Question 6

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

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Question 7

If you answered agree or strongly agree, please tell us how you think we could increase income.

About council reserves

We keep a certain amount of money in reserve. This money is mainly to deal with sudden, unexpected costs, like major repairs to council-owned facilities, or emergencies.

Question 8

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

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Section two - About you

Question 9

Do you receive council tax support? (Please tick one)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Equalities questions

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 any individuals.

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

Question 10

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 11

What is your gender? (Please tick one)

- Male Female I'd prefer not to say

Question 12

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 13

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

- Yes No I'd prefer not to say

The closing date for this survey is Wednesday 16 January

Thank you for giving your views.

**You can also fill this survey in at
www.rushmoor.gov.uk/counciltaxsurvey**

Council Offices,
Farnborough Road,
Farnborough,
Hants, GU14 7JU

www.rushmoor.gov.uk
01252 398 399
customerservices@rushmoor.gov.uk

 [@rushmoorcouncil](https://twitter.com/rushmoorcouncil)
 Rushmoor Borough Council
December 2018

| Scheme Components for 19/20 | Using latest estimate for 19/20) | Numbers Affected |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15% minimum contribution by all WA customers • CB/Maintenance 100% included as income • War Pensions 100% disregard as income | <p>£4,740,587 (-94,182) <i>RBC: - (10,360 11%)</i> <i>HCC, Police & Fire: (-83,822 89%)</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working Age Other 1,034 - Vulnerable 1013 - Household Vulnerable 314 - Working Age Employed 269 |

| | A | B | C | D | E | F |
|------------------------|-----|------|-----|-----|----|---|
| Band of those affected | 221 | 1253 | 938 | 175 | 38 | 5 |

| | 0-25p | 26-50p | 51-75p | 76p-£1 | £1 - £1.05 |
|---------------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|------------|
| Weekly difference (pence) | 31 | 36 | 1708 | 714 | 113 |

| Band C Bill | Annual Bill (12% - 15%) | | Monthly Bill (12% - 15%) | | Weekly Bill (12% - 15%) | |
|-------------|-------------------------|--------|--------------------------|-------|-------------------------|------|
| Couple | 192.06 | 240.07 | 16.00 | 20.00 | 4.00 | 5.00 |
| Single | 144.05 | 180.05 | 12.00 | 15.00 | 3.00 | 3.75 |

Estimate 19/20 CT figs using current 12% scheme claims

January 19 :
£4,834,769

Assumptions made when calculating options:

- Welfare benefit rates and Applicable amounts frozen
- Calculated using latest estimates for 19/20 CT rates
- No caseload growth

Equality Impact Assessment – Draft Council Tax Support Scheme 2019/20

| | |
|--|---|
| Lead Officer | Dawn Menzies-Kelly – Revenues and Benefits Manager |
| Service | Financial Services |
| Proposed change to service | Develop a revised Council Tax Support Scheme(CTSS) for 2019/20 |
| Reasons for service change | <p>The Council Tax Benefit scheme (CTB) was abolished by the Welfare Reform Bill with effect from April 2013. This was replaced with a local Council Tax Support Scheme (CTSS).</p> <p>The Council's original overall budget for CTS had been cut by Central Government with further cuts experienced over the last three years and confirmed to continue. It is for local councils to determine how to manage any funding gaps and any cuts can only be made to a CTS scheme for working age recipients. This is due to the strict guidelines from government to ensure support for pensioners' remains at the same level as previously applied with CTB. This is delivered through a national framework of criteria and allowances.</p> <p>The Government is also continuing with a national programme of welfare reform and it is appropriate to consider whether some of the changes to other welfare systems should be reflected in the Council's local CTSS.</p> <p>Rushmoor Borough Council needs to annually review its CTSS. The scheme must be set each year by 11th March.</p> <p>Any proposed changes must be fully consulted on as well as alternative options to funding changes.</p> |
| Information about users, research or other evidence | <p>Rushmoor Borough Council has the option of not changing the scheme or designing a revised scheme, which closes the funding gap, incentivises work and supports the benefit welfare reform.</p> <p>In order to establish options for change, the Council has established a Welfare Reform Group of cross party elected Members. The Group has met on four occasions during the calendar year of 2018 and considered a vast weight of evidence in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Current recipients ▪ Affordability and Council Tax payment rates ▪ Impact on different groups within the scheme ▪ Comparisons with other similar local authorities within the County, those bordering and those in our Audit family ▪ Various scheme designs, both locally and nationally ▪ Comparisons on collection rates according to scheme design <p>Full details of this evidence base and detailed claimant profiles lye</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | within the supporting documentation for the Member group's meetings. |
| Stakeholder consultation and involvement | <p>Rushmoor Borough Council has been reviewing its council tax support scheme for 2019/20 and decided to consult on four options.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Option one: Increase the minimum amount of council tax that working age people pay from 12% (88% discount) to a 15% (85% discount). ▪ Option two: 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. <p>6 week consultation period (12th December – 16 January) 2,555 working age Council Tax Support (CTS) claimants were sent letters about the consultation</p> <p>4,306 people who have signed up via email to receive news or information about consultations, were sent and email informing them of the consultation with a link to fill in the survey</p> <p>Paper copies were available at the Council Offices and Citizen Advice Rushmoor</p> <p>There were 392 surveys returned (391 online and 1 paper survey). 73 16% of respondents received CTS and 242 61.7% identified themselves as not being in receipt of council tax support. Three respondents didn't know whether they were in receipt of council tax support and 74 respondents skipped the question.</p> |

Impact of change – Who will be affected. How the change will impact on equality groups. Any positive and negative impacts of the changes on users. Actions taken to avoid or lessen any negative impacts.

- As at 16th January 2019, there were a total of 40,353 properties liable for Council Tax in Rushmoor.
- 4820 were receiving CTS and of these, 54.5% (2630) (6.51% of properties) were working age households.
- The changes being considered within the scheme proposals will affect working age people only.
- Further analysis of the equality strands are:

| Age | Positive | Negative |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Profile data available from the current scheme. This covers all those in receipt of CTS</p> <p>Working age = 2630 Pension age = 2192</p> | <p>People of pension age are protected and will not be subject to change under the new scheme.</p> <p>Could incentivise people back into work as earnings disregards and extended payments apply.</p> | <p>The scheme will discriminate on the grounds of age because of the Central Government requirement to protect pensioners. The National Pensioner Scheme treats them more favourably because allowances are more generous and 100%</p> |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| | <p>Our scheme has a hardship fund that provides a safety net so that additional support can be provided for those in exceptional need.</p> <p>We have a track record of providing proactive and tailored support for those working age customers who struggle to make payments. We will continue to ensure our recovery procedures identify cases where additional support might be required.</p> | <p>maximum support applies where entitled.</p> <p>Working age people receive less CTS therefore have more Council Tax to pay.</p> |
|--|---|---|

| Disability | Positive | Negative |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Profile data available from current CTS claims. In this instance, a person is defined as disabled if they are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or a Personal Independence payment.</p> | <p>Disability benefit income is disregarded in full when calculating entitlement.</p> <p>Higher allowances are awarded when calculating support for those receiving disability benefits.</p> <p>Our scheme has a hardship fund that provides a safety net so that additional support can be provided for those in exceptional need.</p> <p>We have a track record of providing proactive and tailored support for those working age customers who struggle to make payments. We will continue to ensure our recovery procedures identify cases where additional support might be required.</p> | <p>Working age people receive less CTS, therefore have more Council Tax to pay. No further specific negative impact is identified for those with disabilities.</p> |

| Marital status, family circumstances or caring responsibilities | Positive | Negative |
|--|--|-----------------|
| <p>Single person household</p> <p>Couple with no children</p> | <p>Higher allowances will be awarded in the calculation of support for carers.</p> | |

| | | |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Families with children | <p>The scheme builds in additional premiums for existing claims where there are children.</p> <p>Our scheme has a hardship fund that provides a safety net so that additional support can be provided for those in exceptional need.</p> <p>We have a track record of providing proactive and tailored support for those working age customers who struggle to make payments. We will continue to ensure our recovery procedures identify cases where additional support might be required.</p> | <p>The changes to legislation, within Housing Benefit from April 2017 regarding the maximum two children rule, were replicated in the councils CTS scheme from April 18. This means working age people with more than two children who made a new claim for CTS after 1 April 2018 have had their CTS calculated on a maximum of two children's allowances regardless of the number of children they actually have.</p> |
|------------------------|---|---|

| Sex (gender) | Positive | Negative |
|--------------|--|---|
| | The scheme will not treat people of different genders any differently. | All people in the working age group who currently receive CTS will pay extra Council Tax. |

| Race/Ethnicity/Religion/ Belief/Sexual Orientation | Positive | Negative |
|---|--|---|
| We do not hold any specific data for this category. | The scheme will not treat people in different race, belief or sexual orientation groups any differently. | All people in the working age group who currently receive CTS will pay extra Council Tax. |

| Proposed changes | Positive | Negative |
|---|---|---|
| Increase to a minimum contribution of 15% | Incentivise people to try to locate paid work or extra hours. | <p>All people in the working age group who currently receive CTS will pay extra Council Tax.</p> <p>2630 people are affected, which is all Working Age recipients of Council Tax Support.</p> |

Issues, Recommendations and Mitigations

- To protect the most vulnerable, or those adversely affected by changes, Rushmoor Borough Council has maintained a Hardship Fund to act as a safety net. It is recommended that this Fund be continued and increased from £10,000 to £12,000 from

1 April 2019 with appropriate capacity to be created for it within the Council's budget setting process for 2019/20.

- ❑ From April 2019, the effects of the final scheme will need to be carefully monitored and any negative effects minimised. It is recommended that this oversight continue to be provided by the Council's cross party elected Member Welfare Reform Group.
- ❑ It is recommended that all customers affected by the changes receive clear explanations, offers of advice and sign posting towards further assistance as soon as is practical following the decision to set a scheme for 2019/20. The Council's on-line information should also reflect the general issues identified within this EIA as soon as practical.