

**TO: Finance and Governance Executive Member Briefing**

**TITLE: Council Tax Support consultation**

**DATE: 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2022**

### **Introduction**

1. This report details the responses from the recent Council Tax Support consultation exercise. Included in the report is the specific responses to the proposed change, and, any suggested changes to the wider scheme and council savings programme.

### **Background**

2. As part of the ongoing corporate review of savings options, a potential amendment to the Council Tax Support Scheme has been put forward for consideration. However, any proposal to change the Council Tax Support Scheme requires the Council to consult major preceptors (Fire and Rescue Authority and Police and Crime Commissioner) and also to undertake a public consultation exercise.
3. The consultation with the major preceptors and public was undertaken over the period 10<sup>th</sup> October 2022 to 18th November 2022.
4. The proposal only relates to support provided to working age claimants (the support provided to pensioner claimants remain unchanged at nationally determined levels).

### **Council Tax Support Scheme – consultation exercise**

5. **Consultation programme**  
A wide variety of methods were used as part of the consultation process with the aim of ensuring feedback from all interested groups, including claimants and non-claimants of Council Tax Support.

6. Overall there were 62 responses to the consultation of which, 24 were currently in receipt of Council Tax Support, whilst 30 declared they were not in receipt. A further 1 respondent skipped the question, 3 did not declare, 2 were from local organisations and 1 from a Major Preceptor. Although the number of responses was low in comparison to the volume of communications that were issued, this appears to be in line with historic levels of responses across the majority of Councils in England.

In respect of gender, of the 59 resident respondents, 65% were female and 35% male.

7. **Consultation with the public**  
Promotion to the public of the on-line consultation was undertaken during telephone calls made directly to the Council, via messages on Benefits and Council Tax letters and emails, and through the issuing of 1,000 emails directly to Council Tax liable parties. This was split equally across recipients and non-recipients of Council Tax Support.

The consultation was also promoted on the Councils web site.

6. **Consultation with major preceptors**  
Individual letters were sent to both major preceptors (Police & Crime Commissioner, Fire & Rescue Authority).

We received one email response from the Director of Corporate Services for the Fire & Rescue Authority. No specific comments were made on the proposal, only the impact on the Council Tax base.

7. **Consultation with Voluntary and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector organisations**

The details of the consultation was issued to 12 local voluntary sector organisations.

We received 2 general responses to the Scheme and the difficulties families faced.

**Detailed Consultation Results**

8. This section details the responses to the consultation which asked the respondents for their opinions on the increase in deductions for non-dependents, plus general comments on the wider Council Tax Support scheme, and corporate savings programme.

This section shows the overall results for each question but also breaks down those who could be potentially directly affected by changes to Council Tax Support, and those that would not. A total of 62 responses were received to the consultation. These can be broken down as follows:

Category	Number
Blackburn with Darwen resident receiving CTS	24
Blackburn with Darwen resident not receiving CTS	30
Blackburn with Darwen resident that did not state CTS position	4
Local organisation	2
Major preceptor	1

9. **Responses to questions**

Question 1 in the consultation asked:

*'If there is a non-dependant (adult who resides in the property but does not own or rent it) living in the household, a deduction of £5.00 per week is currently made to the Council Tax Support awarded to a claimant. Do you agree with the proposal to increase the rate of deduction to £7.00 per week?'*

A total of 59 residents responded to this question. Overall 62% of respondents supported increasing the non-dependent deduction to £7 while 27% opposed. A further 11% did not know.

Question 2 in the consultation asked:

*'Do you have any other suggestions how the Council Tax Support Scheme should be changed to reduce the cost of the scheme?'*

A total of 11 responses were submitted.

When you move the council support stops and you have to apply again for it.
Premium charged on empty properties should be removed. You should ask them the reason first why their properties are empty before charging any premium
Better planning
Only give it to elderly people or those with physical disabilities preventing work
no support for people in high bands
an easier scheme to understand on how i may qualify
No unfortunately people need help

It's hard as it is for low income people to pay theirs bills as the cost of living is high at the moment. Maybe ask the Government for more money
It exists to support those who need it, so should be fair. However if more than one person lives in a house it's fair they take a share of the cost
Reduce council tax bills across the board by a given percentage. The cost of paying yourselves is far to high for the poor services we receive
Stop wasting people's hard earned money that Blackburn sign outside the bus station is a mess the streets of Blackburn with Darwen are stinking dirty

Question 2 in the consultation asked:

***'Do you have any suggestions how the Council can make further budget savings?'***

A total of 15 responses were submitted

Giving more support to the people
Employ better staff
Start making cuts in wages for the people on 30k+ a year
Highest earners to take pay cuts, less party in the parks events, get rid of mayor's etc! Sell off more council buildings, work from home where possible and down size departments to work from smaller floors.
Installation of Solar Panels, wind turbines for local buildings to reduce energy bills for public buildings. - increase charges at leisure facilities - closure of some public buildings on specific days, for example on a Friday at the town halls, heating and lighting could then be turned off from Thursday afternoon
The bins need emptying weekly. This would stop flytipping which would save the council money but not have to clear the flytipping
Commission appropriate and value for money services
Emergency panic alarm systems could be paid monthly on similar monthly payments contract charged by ageuk or similar agencies to client
Stop using money for silly statues such as the demented chicken in the centre of Darwen
Make redundant/sack anyone that job description that has a postmodern marxist origin. eg Diversity and Inclusion Manager. Judging people on their melanin levels, genitalia, and sexual preference instead of competence is appalling. Also I don't want the council to take the money it's population creates and give it back to the population in the form of grants and 'funding opportunities'. We know where our own money is best spent, without it going through a bureaucracy. Don't take it from us in the first place. Also I've just read the last question, gender is not independent from sex. Gender theory was introduced by John Money. This chap did experiments to two twin boys. One was forced into sex change surgery, he later committed suicide. The other died of a drug overdose. You asking the question of gender, rather than sex implies a support of gender theory and therefore support of John Money. Do you support paedophilic behaviours?
Review your management structure for wastage
Have fundraising events
Stop building new roads then digging them up a few weeks later. Make utility companies plan around you!
Yes you can stop taking people to court until the end of the council tax year and added further debt on the council tax bill then sending the bill to the bailiffs before the said period

Yes reduce the amount of recycling bins we have there is no need to have 4 bins

## **Conclusion**

10. Whilst the number of respondents to the consultation was low, the Council has fulfilled its obligation to consult residents and major precepting authorities prior to the changing of the Council Tax Support scheme. The results and comments can now be considered alongside the proposal and potential savings.