

Consultation Summary

Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2014-2015

The summary of findings from the consultation and engagement on the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme relating to annual uprating of personal allowances and applicable amounts for working age claimants is summarised below.

Pensioners - the Council will revise the 2013/14 Local Council Tax Reduction scheme to take account of the annual uprating for allowances, premia, non-dependant deductions and any other statutory requirements in accordance with the Government's legislation for 2014 to 2015.

The Council are required by law to implement these changes for pensioners and this does not require any consultation.

The Consultation

The Council has been consulting with the public on the proposed Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2014-2015.

Consultation commenced on 6th December 2013 and ended on 6th January 2014.

Methodology

The Consultation for the general public took the form of an on-line questionnaire which was accessed via the Council's website. Members of the public were able to view a copy of the proposed amendment to the scheme on the Council's website and then complete the questionnaire giving their views. A link to the questionnaire was also included on the intranet.

A press release was issued giving details of the proposed amendments to the scheme and how members of the public could have their say.

A letter was sent to 74 stakeholders inviting them to comment.

Details of the number of responses received are included in the results section of this report.

Contact was also made with Council Tax Preceptors to ascertain their views and details are also included in the results section.

The Results

35 responses were received to the **online questionnaire** by the closing date on 6th January 2014.

The following paragraphs give details of the questions asked and responses.

Question 1

Do you agree that the Council should increase (uprate) the personal allowances and applicable amounts in accordance with the Department for Work and Pensions rates for non-pensioners?

Response	No of responses	%
Yes	28	80
No	7	20
Total	35	100

Question 2

Do you have any further comments?

The following comments were received from those who **Agreed** with the proposals:

- We are living on bare minimum I am on JSA and my partner works part time. I am pregnant and no-one will hire me as I'm due to go on maternity. We get 100 to help with our rent each month and no council tax reduction off our £150 bill.
- Discounts for non-pensioners must return too..Our CT bill doubled to £1300 this year - our income didn't double though, so we're paying CT from savings.
- People on benefits should always have them uprated. They are the sectors of society who need the help the most.
- £15 per month is still too cheap for them to pay.
- I have advanced HIV and I am struggling to pay each month 28.00 to me it is a lot of money, and I budgeted that for travel to hospital, which in turn is know affecting my health. This is not the UNITED KINGDOM values we were taught in history.
- The amount of council tax reduction for non pensioners who are in receipt of income based JSA /ESA(£71.00 per week) this group of people cannot afford the 20% they are expected to pay
- The personal allowance reduction is essential for those like myself who are the sole occupiers of a property. I feel it should be more in line with a 50% reduction rather than the 25% currently given.

- It is obviously another paper exercise that is required, the same as the library review. YOU DON'T LISTEN TO WHAT RESIDENTS SAY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- I am a working parent of 4 children struggling to pay household bills. I am now trying to feed us all on the £60 surplus per week I have left. I cannot take anymore reduction to my personal budget.
- Have read the info, haven't got a clue what you are talking about can't be only one
- I believe that single under 25s should get full CTR like pensioners as their applicable amount is only £57. They cannot afford to pay council tax on that amount.
- I find this quite a confusing issue. I'm not sure if "uprating personal allowances" means that people pay more of less council tax - although, in my view, NO-ONE on any sort of benefit should be forced to pay ANY council tax at all.

The following comments were received from those who **did not agree** with the proposals:

- This does not make any sense at all you need to reduce council tax immediately
- I am my nan's fulltime carer. I get income support and carers allowance, which is to cover the left over of my housing costs, fuel, food and it doesn't. On top of that I then have to find an additional amount for council tax which is impossible
- It is not just pensioners in financial difficulty, single parents and those studying also need help. Stop wasting money on plants and lights for Christmas ensure vital services are maintained

Question 3

About yourself – gender

Response	No of responses	%
Female	19	54
Male	10	29
Prefer not to say	6	17
Total	35	100

Question 4

About yourself – age

Response	No of responses	%
18-24	1	3
25-39	7	20
40-59	18	52
60-74	3	9
Prefer not to say	6	16
Total	35	100

Question 5

About yourself – Do you have a long term illness, health problem or disability which limits your daily activities?

Response	No of responses	%
Yes	4	11
No	25	72
Prefer not to say	6	17
Total	35	100

Question 6

About yourself – Which of these describes your ethnic group?

Response	No of responses	%
White	26	74
Black	0	0
Asian	1	3
Mixed	1	3
Other	0	0
Prefer not to say	7	21
Total	35	100

Of those who said that they ***didn't agree*** with the proposal (7) the following statistics have been obtained:-

Gender

Response	No of responses	%
Female	2	29
Male	1	14
Prefer not to say	4	57
Total	7	100

Age

Response	No of responses	%
18-24	0	0
25-39	1	14
40-59	1	14
60-74	1	14
Prefer not to say	4	58
Total	7	100

Long Term Illness/Health Problem/Disability

Response	No of responses	%
Yes	1	14
No	2	29
Prefer not to say	4	57
Total	7	100

Ethnicity

Response	No of responses	%
White	2	29
Black	0	0
Asian	0	0
Mixed	1	14
Other	0	0
Prefer not to say	4	57
Total	7	100

Of those who said that they **did agree** with the proposal (28) the following statistics have been obtained:-

Gender

Response	No of responses	%
Female	17	61
Male	9	32
Prefer not to say	2	7
Total	28	100

Age

Response	No of responses	%
18-24	1	4
25-39	6	21
40-59	17	61
60-74	2	7
Prefer not to say	2	7
Total	28	100

Long Term Illness/Health Problem/Disability

Response	No of responses	%
Yes	3	11
No	23	82
Prefer not to say	2	7
Total	28	100

Ethnicity

Response	No of responses	%
White	24	86
Black	0	0
Asian	1	4
Mixed	0	0
Other	0	0
Prefer not to say	3	10
Total	28	100

Consultation with the precepting Authorities –

Merseyside Police and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Services

The precepting authorities were consulted in writing. The Council has received written feedback from Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and the following comments were provided:

“Broadly the Fire and Rescue Authority recognises that the districts face a challenging task balancing

- a) The impact on vulnerable individuals of the reductions in council tax benefit funding
- b) Trying not to lose council tax income as a result of the changes in a time when resources for local government are severely constrained.

Sefton’s original scheme and the proposed changes seem a pragmatic and fair approach and we support the proposed changes and in particular the change to the discount on empty dwellings.”

Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside

The feedback from the Commissioner is that she is supportive of the proposals.

Stakeholders – were consulted in writing. 74 letters were issued inviting them to complete the online survey. There were no responses received in writing.

Equalities

As part of the consultation, equalities questions were asked in connection to gender, age, disability and ethnicity. The consultation responses do not indicate any disproportional impact.

Older people (pensioners) are a protected group within the Equalities Act and the annual uprating is covered in the proposed scheme by Government legislation.