

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - OUTCOME OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND THE 2017-18 SCHEMES

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Joint Strategic Committee considered a report in respect of the Council Tax Support schemes in respect of both Adur and Worthing Councils for 2017/18 on 13 September 2016 and after discussions with the relevant Executive Members regarding the questions to be included, public consultations for both Councils were conducted.
- 1.2 At the meetings of the Full Councils held in February 2016 it was resolved that
- Adur (meeting held on 25 February 2016)
 - The 2016/17 scheme should form the basis of the scheme for 2017/18 subject to further considerations based on a report being brought back to the Joint Strategic Committee
 - Worthing (meeting held on 23 February 2016)
 - The 2016/17 scheme should form the basis of the scheme for 2017/18 subject to consultation; and
 - Delegated authority should be given to the Executive Member for Resources in consultation with the Executive Member for Customer Services to determine the scheme for 2017/18
- 1.3 This report provides an analysis of the results of the consultations and invites the Executive Member for Resources for Worthing and the Executive Member for Customer Services for Worthing to determine the scheme for 2017/18 for Worthing Borough Council.
- 1.4 A separate report has been produced for the Joint Strategic Committee in order that the scheme for Adur District Council for 2017/18 can be recommended to Full Council.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Since April 2013 Members have had the freedom to set a local Council Tax Support Scheme in respect of “working age” customers. Both Councils opted to retain the national scheme for 2013/14 and 2014/15 and whilst Adur District Council also retained the national scheme for 2015/16 and 2016/17, Worthing Borough Council

introduced a £5.00 per week restriction for all “working age” customers together with a discretionary budget to allow additional assistance to be provided where appropriate.

- 2.2 Over the past few years the cost of Council Tax Support has fallen as local employment has improved and, following the introduction of the £5.00 weekly restriction in Worthing from 1 April 2015, the overall cost has been:

	2012/13 Actual	2013/14 Actual	2014/15 Actual	2015/16 Actual	2016/17 Estimate
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adur	5,195	4,975	4,633	4,414	4,517
Worthing	7,287	7,049	6,754	5,201	5,438
	12,482	12,024	11,387	9,615	9,955
Annual decrease (-) / increase		-3.67%	-5.3%	-15.6%	3.5%

- 2.3 However, the grant towards the cost of Council Tax Support Schemes has been consolidated into the Revenue Support Grant which has fallen each year and will cease by 2018/19. This means that the Councils face an ever-increasing cost associated with the scheme. By 2016/17, the level of subsidy is expected to be:

	2016/17 cost of CTS	Council share of overall cost	Grant received	Net cost	Percentage shortfall in funding
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Adur	4,517.00	806.10	-526.00	280.10	34.75
Worthing	5,438.00	759.50	-588.20	171.30	22.55

- 2.4 The amount of subsidy that the Councils are required to contribute towards the cost of the schemes will continue to increase as Revenues Support Grant is reduced. Based on a 2% increase in both the basic Council Tax and the Social Care levy from West Sussex County Council in 2017/18 and 2018/19, the level of subsidy will increase as follows:

Net Cost of Council Tax Support	2013/14 Actual	2015/15 Actual	2015/16 Actual	2016/17 Estimate	2017/18 Estimate	2018/19 Estimate
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adur	6.70	46.30	101.80	280.10	411.60	489.40
Worthing	57.00	125.90	16.50	171.30	308.90	396.60

3.0 ANALYSIS OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

3.1 The Councils undertook separate consultations between 30 September 2016 and 1 November 2016 with the intention of reaching as many residents as possible. This year details of both the Adur and Worthing consultations were:

- Added to the Councils' website
- Promoted in a press release
- Explained in a short article appearing in local newspapers
- Promoted on social media
- Promoted on both the Adur & Worthing and Mid Sussex websites
- Issued as hard copies by the Customer Service Team to visitors both at The Shoreham Centre and Portland House
- Issued as hard copies with all benefit award letters for residents of Worthing

3.2 The Adur consultation contained the following seven questions and also allowed respondents to make any additional comments:

1. Do you
 - a. Live, work or run a business in Adur
 - b. Live, work or run a business in Worthing
 - c. None of the above
2. How old are you?
3. What's your postcode
4. Do you currently get Council Tax Support?
5. Are you disabled?
6. For next year's scheme, are there any changes that you would like to see from 1 April 2017?
7. For next year's scheme, should the rules for Council Tax Support be the same as the rules for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit so people understand how the scheme works?

3.3 The Worthing consultation contained the following eight questions and also allowed respondents to make any additional comments:

1. Do you
 - a. Live, work or run a business in Worthing
 - b. Live, work or run a business in Adur
 - c. None of the above
2. How old are you?
3. What's your postcode
4. Do you currently get Council Tax Support?
5. Are you disabled?
6. For next year's scheme, should we keep the current £5.00 per week restriction with extra help for those who would find paying £5.00 difficult?
7. For next year's scheme, should the rules for Council Tax Support be the same as the rules for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit so people understand how the scheme works?
8. For next year's scheme, are there any changes that you would like to see?

3.4 35 and 129 responses were received to the Adur and Worthing consultations respectively.

3.5 Full details of the responses are shown in appendix 1 with a summary of the outcomes being:

Adur

Approximately 14% of respondents currently receive Council Tax Support and there was strong support for the Council Tax Support rules being be aligned with the rules for Housing Benefit

- Of the 5 respondents who currently get Council Tax Support
 - None stated that they would like to see changes
 - 3 (60%) stated that they would not like to see changes
 - 2 (40%) stated that they didn't know whether they would like to see changes
- Of the 28 respondents who are not in receipt of Council Tax Support
 - 10 (35.71%) stated that they would like to see changes. Of the five comments that related to the level of Council Tax Support, three were in favour of reducing awards and two were in favour of increasing awards
 - 6 (21.43%) stated that they would not like to see changes
 - 12 (42.86%) stated that they didn't know whether they would like to see changes
- Of the 2 respondents who weren't sure whether they are in receipt of Council Tax Support, both didn't know whether they would like to see changes

Worthing

Almost 21% of respondents currently receive Council Tax Support and there was strong support for the Council Tax Support rules being be aligned with the rules for Housing Benefit

- Of the 27 respondents who currently get Council Tax Support
 - 13 (48.15%) stated that the £5.00 weekly restriction should end
 - 12 (44.44%) stated that the £5.00 week restriction should continue with extra help for those who would find making payment difficult
 - 2 (7.41%) stated that they didn't know or weren't sure whether the restriction should continue
- Of the 97 respondents who are not in receipt of Council Tax Support
 - 43 (44.33%) stated that the £5.00 weekly restriction should end
 - 44 (45.36%) stated that the £5.00 week restriction should continue with extra help for those who would find making payment difficult
 - 10 (10.31%) stated that they didn't know or weren't sure whether the restriction should continue
- Of the 5 respondents who weren't sure whether they are in receipt of Council Tax Support
 - 3 (60%) stated that the £5.00 weekly restriction should end
 - 2 (40%) stated that the £5.00 week restriction should continue with extra help for those who would find making payment difficult
- Of the 59 respondents who said that the £5.00 restriction should end
 - 43 (72.88%) do not currently receive Council Tax Support
 - 13 (22.04%) currently receive Council Tax Support
 - 3 (5.08%) didn't know or weren't sure whether they currently receive Council Tax Support
- Of the 58 respondents who said that the £5.00 restriction should continue
 - 44 (75.86%) do not currently receive Council Tax Support

- 12 (20.69%) currently receive Council Tax Support
- 2 (3.45%) weren't sure whether they currently receive Council Tax Support

4.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In respect of 2013/14 and 2014/15 both Councils adopted an amended “default” Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Adur also adopted the “default” Council Tax Reduction Scheme in respect of 2015/16 and 2016/17. In all instances this was in accordance with The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Scheme) (England) Regulations 2012, Statutory Instrument 2012 No. 2886 and The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012, Statutory Instrument 2012 No. 2885.
- 4.2 Any Council Tax Reduction Scheme must comply with the relevant sections of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 and with the delegated legislation under that Act as contained within The Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Default Scheme) Regulations 2012 and the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) Regulations 2012, as amended.
- 4.3 Further, under Schedules 4 paragraph 3 of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 the Councils are required before making the Schemes (and to do so in the following order) to consult with the major precepting authorities, publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fits and consult with such other person as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the Scheme. Note that any revision of a Scheme must follow the same process as the making a Scheme. In the case of R (Moseley) v London Borough of Haringey [2014] UKSC 56 the Supreme Court held that the statutory duty of consultation required the consultees to be provided with information about the draft scheme but also with an outline of the realistic alternatives and an indication of the authority’s main reasons for adopting the draft scheme.
- 4.4 The requirement to consult annually with residents has therefore been complied with.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 With the anticipated reductions in Revenue Support Grant over the next few years the annual cost of the scheme for each Council falls increasingly upon Council Tax payers.

Net Cost of Council Tax Support	2013/14 Actual	2015/15 Actual	2015/16 Actual	2016/17 Estimate	2017/18 Estimate	2018/19 Estimate
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adur	6.70	46.30	101.80	280.10	411.60	489.40
Worthing	57.00	125.90	16.50	171.30	308.90	396.60

- 5.2 If Adur members choose to implement a £5.00 per week restriction accompanied by a discretionary Council Tax Support Hardship Fund, the financial gain in respect of 2017/18 is estimated to be:

	Overall	Adur District Council share
	£'000	£'000
Impact of reduced Council Tax Support cost on Council Tax income	760.5	127.5
Less: Additional collection costs (to be agreed with CenSus)	-25	-25
Less: Hardship Fund	-80	-20
Less: Allowance for increased write offs @ 5%	-38.0	-6.4
	622.50	81.1

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 There is no clear statistical outcome based on the responses received to the Worthing public consultation as to whether to current £5.00 weekly restriction should continue.
- 6.2 In both Adur and Worthing there is strong support that the rules for Council Tax Support should be aligned with the rules for Housing Benefit. In practice, alignment of the rules makes it easier for customers to understand benefit awards and also results in the administration of joint claims for both benefits being more straight-forward.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 **The Executive Member for Resources, in consultation with the Executive Member for Customer Services, is asked to determine that:**
1. **The Council Tax Support scheme for Worthing Borough Council in respect of 2017/18 should be based upon the scheme for 2016/17 with**
 - a. **The £5.00 weekly restriction retained; and**
 - b. **No other changes made beyond necessary technical amendments required to keep the scheme consistent with the national rules in respect of Housing Benefit;**
 2. **A further public consultation should be conducted during the summer of 2017 to inform the decision in respect of the scheme to be implemented in respect of 2018/19.**

Local Government Act 1972

Background Papers: Localising Support for Council Tax in England report to the Joint Strategic Committee held on 22nd July 2014

Welfare Reform Act 2012

Local Government Finance Bill 2012

Minutes of the meetings of the Joint Strategic Committee of Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils held on 26 July 2012, 28 November 2012, 3 December 2013, 2 December 2014, 2 February 2016 and 13 September 2016

Minutes of the Full Council meetings held on 23 and 25 February 2016 for Worthing and Adur Councils respectively

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SCHEDULE OF OTHER MATTERS

1.0 COUNCIL PRIORITY

1.1 By undertaking a public consultation about the proposed changes, the Councils will be listening to and engaging with our communities.

2.0 SPECIFIC ACTION PLANS

2.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

3.0 SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

3.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

4.0 EQUALITY ISSUES

4.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

5.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY ISSUES (SECTION 17)

5.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

6.0 HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

6.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

7.0 REPUTATION

7.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 A public consultation has been undertaken.

9.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

9.1 There is a statutory duty on the Councils to do what is proposed and not doing it would carry severe financial and reputational risks.

10.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES

10.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

11.0 PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

11.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

12.0 PARTNERSHIP WORKING

12.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

APPENDIX 1 - consultation outcomes

Adur consultation

Question 1: Do you

	Live in Adur	Live in Worthing	Live in Adur and run a business in Adur	Live in Adur, work in Worthing
Number	30	1	2	2
Percentage	85.72%	2.86%	5.71%	5.71%

Q2: How old are you

	Under 18	19 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 69	70+
Number	0	3	1	10	6	9	6
Percentage	0.00%	8.57%	2.86%	28.58%	17.14%	25.71%	17.14%

Q3: Postcode. Where full post codes were provided they have been mapped as shown in appendix 2.

Q4: Do you currently get Council Tax Support?

	Yes	No	Don't know/not sure
Number	5	28	2
Percentage	14.29%	80.00%	5.71%

Q5: Are you disabled?

	Yes	No	Prefer not to say
Number	5	28	2
Percentage	14.29%	80.00%	5.71%

Q6: Are there any changes you would like to see from 1 April 2017?

	Yes	No	Don't know/not sure
Number	10	9	16
Percentage	28.57%	25.71%	45.72%

Where respondents answered "yes" to question 6 they were asked to explain what changes they would like to see. Responses are shown in appendix 3.

Q7: Should the rules for Council Tax Support be the same as the rules for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit so people understand how the scheme works?

	Yes	No	Don't know/not sure
Number	20	6	9
Percentage	57.14%	17.15%	25.71%

Additional comments that were submitted are shown in appendix 3.

Worthing consultation

Question 1: Do you

	Number	Percentage
Live in Worthing	95	73.63%
Work in Worthing	1	0.78%
Live in Worthing and work in Worthing	17	13.17%
Live in Worthing and run a business in Worthing	3	2.33%
Live in Worthing, work in Worthing and run a business in Worthing	7	5.43%
Live in Worthing and work in Adur	2	1.55%
Live in Worthing, work in Worthing and work in Adur	2	1.55%
Live in Adur	1	0.78%
Live in Adur and work in Worthing	1	0.78%

Q2: How old are you

	Under 18	19 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	60 to 69	70+
Number	0	10	18	28	27	31	15
Percentage	0.00%	7.75%	13.95%	21.71%	20.93%	24.03%	11.63%

Q3: Postcode. Where full post codes were provided they have been mapped as shown in appendix 2.

Q4: Do you currently get Council Tax Support?

	Yes	No	Don't know/not sure
Number	27	97	5
Percentage	20.93%	75.19%	3.88%

Q5: Are you disabled?

	Yes	No	Don't know/not sure	Prefer not to say
Number	25	97	4	3
Percentage	19.38 %	75.19 %	3.10%	2.33%

Q6: For next year's scheme, should we keep the current £5.00 per week restriction with extra help for those who would find paying £5.00 difficult?

	Yes	No	Don't know/not sure
Number	58	59	12
Percentage	44.96%	45.74%	9.30%

Q7: For next year's scheme, should the rules for Council Tax Support be the same as the rules for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit so people understand how the scheme works?

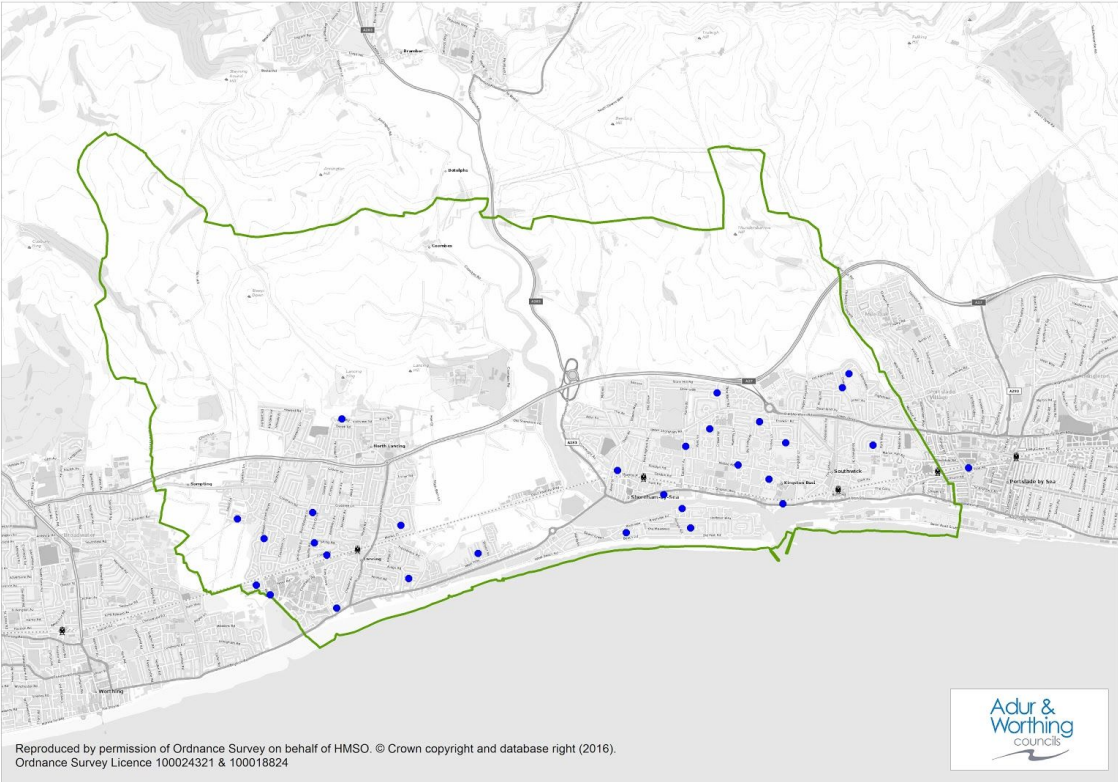
	Yes	No	Don't know/not sure
Number	77	15	37
Percentage	59.69%	11.63%	28.68%

Q8: For next year's scheme, are there any other changes that you would like to see?

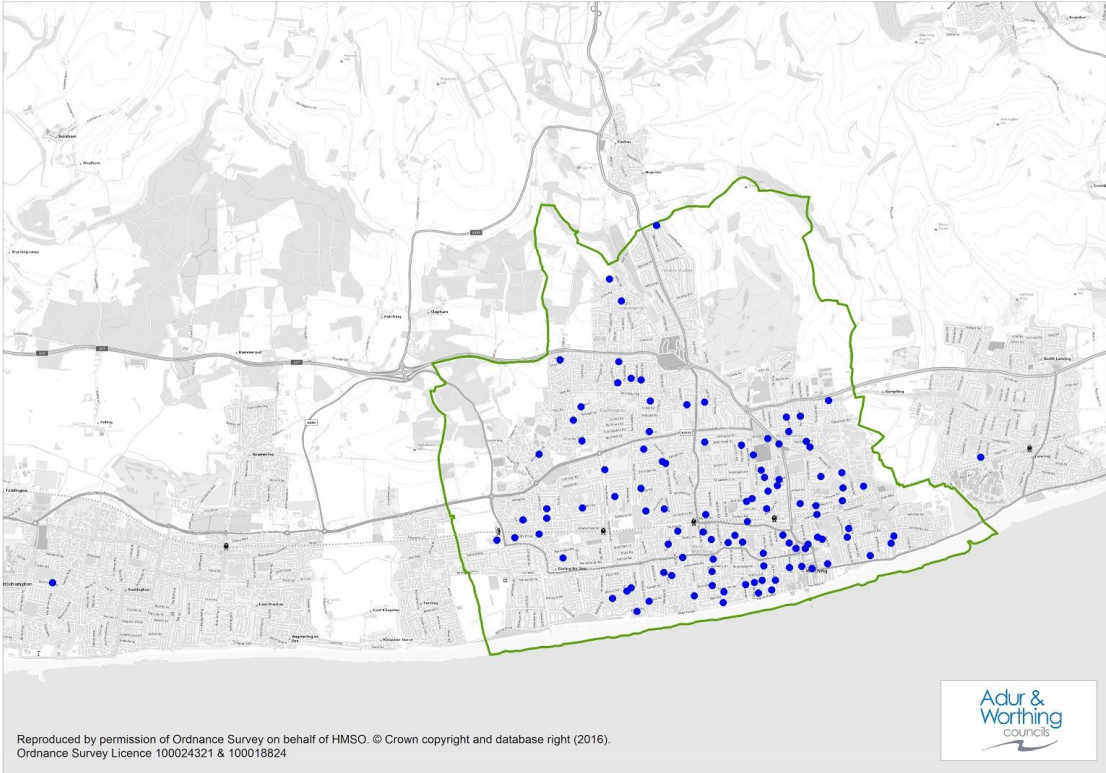
Responses to this question have been included with the "additional comments" shown in appendix 4.

APPENDIX 2 - maps of consultation respondent post codes

Adur



Worthing



APPENDIX 3 - Adur consultation: changes that respondents would like to see from 1 April 2017, plus additional comments

Changes for next year's scheme:

Reduce my charges comm charge
Greater spending by the council, stop cut backs
No further support
Generally, Council Tax needs to be increased for every resident.
Everyone, regardless of financial position, contributing to tax of the area
More support for working single parents with working adult children the adult children are on a low income but you still lose your 25% discount. Southern water offer discounts on water rates based on your income even if it's £22k and you're not in receipt of benefit I think council tax should also offer a sliding discount proportionate to earnings and adult children dependants
This group should be exempted from Council Tax as they used to be before
I would like to see housing benefit paid direct to a landlord
Reduce the level of Council tax support available for all working age adults
More council tax help for low income and disabled persons. Pay less to councillors to fund it.

Additional comments:

Rents should be linked to inflation
You should consider pensioners
Support needs to be phased downwards gradually
Clarity on the website re claiming any support
You should be eligible for a discount if you have low disposable income not just a low income
I strongly feel that if there is money for councillors to have high wages and an increase in expenses allowance then there is something quite wrong with the way council (taxpayers' money) money is being spent, especially as low income and disabled help and benefits are being cut

APPENDIX 4 - Worthing consultation: other changes that respondents would like to see for next year's scheme, plus additional comments

Changes for next year's scheme:

National - why can't all benefits be linked in some way? I have had difficulty finding out what I am entitled to and this caused delays and therefore further financial worries. Can't all the agencies 'talk to each other'?
I believe instead of not saving in my account that to have wasted /squandered my <i>[unable to read]</i> - savings should or would have been a better proposal. Further I see that any capital is not hew(?) requested as any savings credit is not calculated. DWP advised that ASP (?) assessed income period qualified until the renewed same.
Please remember that for the former chancellor delighted in freezing working age benefit 'uprating' (increase) for the past 3 years. So the struggle to pay council tax is immensely worrying for claimants. Many comfortably off worthing residents have no idea how it is to try to exist year on year on so little. Benefits are bnot generous. I have a neighbour who fears her annual Council Tax bill and has cut her spending to the bone, to pay this after many years of full Council Tax.
It's not fair for the people on benefits from Worthing are getting charged when everywhere is not. There's no help just court summons

Additional comments:

I think £5 per week is enough for people to find from their fortnightly benefit(s)
Everyone should pay council tax at the same rate
I feel £5 is adequate enough. We don't want people overly struggling and they will be if the amount goes up
You could always increase it a little, just to keep up with your running costs and inflation generally, without actually doubling it or 'drastically' increasing it. It seems fair that everyone should pay a fair amount but not to cripple people on low/fixed incomes. (Are you still allowed to use the word cripple)? Sorry if not
I think that we should help the most vulnerable people in our borough
It would be helpful in your e-form to explain exactly what the current HB and UC rules are rather than assume a detailed knowledge (and I am someone who used to work in HB/CTB but I am not up-to-date). I therefore have said "don't know" Also in answer to my "no" we shouldn't keep the current "every working age person pays at least £5 a week" I think if someone is assessed as requiring full HB they should receive full CTS - you are only taking another benefit payment off them by insisting they pay a min. of £5 a week. These people are living on very little money as it is and I am sure you will find it more work (and more costly) chasing the people for the extra £260 a year. Take more off the people with larger properties to make up for it - there is barely any difference in the Council Tax bands. Why not recoup costs there to support those who need it?

I find it extremely difficult to find the extra £5 a week to pay council tax. When you have very little money coming in, £5 a week is a lot. When you are disabled, you have extra outgoings such as taxis and buying equipment and other things that able bodied people don't. Stop taking out financial problems on those that can least afford it. If councils got together they could fight the government to get the money they need to provide local services

It is important for those who need help to know where & how to access this

it seems an all or nothing scheme. My daughter was in college, but she had to leave the course because she didnt have 100% attendance becasue she was admitted into hospital due to complicattions with diabetes treatment. this was only for a week but left her with no course and no job and not even benefits , therefore had to pay council tax.but from what? so unfair

I have a long term illness called Fibromyalgia and do not work at the moment. Every day is a battle. My son has just started college and our situation is always financially difficult. Why is it that the government always wants to eek extra pennies away from people who are already struggling to survive every day? Try targeting people who twist and abuse every aspect of the law to fund their own pockets. Sounds a bit like government ministers and fat cat business men to me

Disabled adults have had cut after cut in their support over the last five years, it's disgusting that the council started charging them £5.00 in the first place.

I'm not the only person who have had all my ILA (fifteen hours of support) removed leaving me bereft, but on top of that you start charging for council tax. I wouldn't mind so much if the council enforced disability rights where possible but it's quite evident - with the opening of non accessible studio spaces in Colonnade House - that they don't. Wheelchair access should be considered a human right, not an optional extra!

Has the council looked at the effects on disabled adults (unable to work) of all the cuts have? Not just your own efficiencies, but...for instance when I need a new specialist cushion for my wheelchair I now have to go to Brighton to get one. That means having to pay someone to drive me there, support me whilst there and get me home. This is just one example of the many ever increasing costs of living as a disabled adult. The four hours (a week) care I get with my DLA doesn't go very far.

What are we paying £5.00 a week for when my world and options in your world constantly get smaller? You may not be responsible as a council for some of the cuts, but as my local council you should at least be aware of the big picture of the lives of disabled adults and how much we have lost lately before implementing extra charges.

If you want to live in a community where disabled adults who are unable to earn a living are slowly killed off then carry on. This may sound extreme to you, but it's a very real experience in my life.

I have to admit, it makes me feel very angry when I and my husband are working full time and have one daughter who attends breakfast club which we are paying for (I do not mind as it is not a lot of money) but when I see few mothers who claim benefits and dropping their children to the club and do not have to pay even a penny I think it's not

<p>on. They do not have to rush to work, they have plenty of time, why they cannot take care of their children</p>
<p>Monies can be saved by staff reductions. There are too many employees doing "no jobs". A reduction in numbers of 15% is easily achievable</p>
<p>The department is not run effectively. I have had to phone multiple times to get a correct bill despite giving correct information first time. Whilst they were rectifying the mistake they tried to insist that I paid full council tax even though I am entitled to a 25% discount. On another occasion I was in trouble with my landlord as they got a letter chasing the council tax even though I had been paying for 3 months, the landlord thought I was not paying it. I have also been given incorrect information by your advisers regarding paying the council tax on an empty property. Train you team better and you will see immediate cost savings</p>
<p>We need to ensure we support the vulnerable in our society</p>
<p>Remove the £5 per week charge for people receiving CTS</p>
<p>Too many lazy and young on benefits that are draining resources that should be used to help our aged population that have for the most worked all their life</p>
<p>Those most in need should receive the most help</p>
<p>Stop the cut backs and let government know how hard these constant cut backs are affecting people</p>
<p>Thorough means testing vital</p>
<p>Help For Disabled Persons Whom don't get anything towards this high cost.</p>
<p>Disabled residents of working age in receipt of means tested benefits should be exempt from council tax and receive 100% discount, as per the former Income Support rules. (Many live alone on a very small fixed income and trying to pay even £4 or £5 every week for council tax puts them in a state of continual stress exacerbating their poor health. A little more compassion from the 'wealthy of Worthing' needs to be shown, not least from some conservative members of Worthing Borough Council</p>
<p>Disabled people should not have to pay!</p>
<p>I don't think people on a working age benefit (e.g. JSA/ESA) should have to pay towards council tax. These are subsistence level benefits and it would be fairer to increase CT slightly more overall. A lot of retirees in Worthing could afford it.</p>
<p>Not sure about this survey. I feel everybody should pay for what they get. To many people take advantage of benefits be it council tax reduction or others. Make them all pay</p>
<p>Low income citizens should pay no council tax</p>
<p>No council tax would be good</p>
<p>I do think that a few examples of the outcome of the answers would be helpful</p>

The questions are somewhat opaque which means that a lot of people may vote for the wrong outcome
Since there were people who deserved relief but were too proud to ask, scrap the £5 compulsory contribution unless they don't get other benefits
When giving people the minimum to live off each month it is very unfair to take money away from them. £5 a week is a lot of money and I think it needs to be reconsidered
Everybody should pay on benefits or not
You should provide more information to better explain the questions so that respondents can make an informed choice. As it is, IMHO this survey is fairly useless
Need to explain things better in your letters and with people who sadly can't work and asking for help how can you then ask them to pay £20 a month might not sound a lot but it is and it is very hard to find the money when you don't have it bring back the old way where if you can't work and not your fault you can't work you get full help in paying your council tax
If you ask whether the rules for X should be the same as the rules for Y, you should say what the rules for Y are!
Those that can't afford it shouldn't have to pay full stop
Anyone on low income will find it difficult to pay, so the extra help will need to be given to most people. This cost cutting measure is hurting those who are already struggling
Making people of working age who are disabled and on benefits pay £5 a week towards Council Tax has caused some hardship in the current year. This will only get harder in 2017 with prices rising and benefits being capped. Pensioners are protected but they actually have a considerably higher personal living allowance. A 1% increase to council tax will be a small amount for those who are lucky enough to be working or have good pensions and is more equitable than making the most vulnerable in our society pay
I do NOT agree with reducing people's incomes because it reduces the demand for goods and services damaging private businesses
£5 a week may not seem like a lot but will have a huge impact on those that qualify for the "extra help"
I would rather pay more council tax than have families on low incomes be restricted, then have to try and claim money back. The rules should definitely be different, as housing benefit/universal credit is very difficult to work out
People in need should be exempt
That's a really ambiguously worded questionnaire, I feel you should have made more of an effort to make the information clear.....I all i know is, it's immoral to charge someone £5 a week if they have no income. It's also immoral to word that question like the charge is a good thing so people think they're voting a different way
I urge the council not to impose council tax on people on benefits. Happily my partner

<p>and I have good jobs. However we have both experienced unemployment at times in our lives and know how hard it was to survive</p>
<p>I believe we should return to exemption from council tax for those in financial difficulty. We need to take from those who can most afford it, not those who least can</p>
<p>Pensioners on benefits should pay the same as working age people on benefits</p>
<p>Councillors who seek to reduce support for the poorest in the Borough who are already hit hardest by the Government led austerity measures are shameful. The Housing Benefits caps are unfair, unwarranted, unwanted and unhelpful. Even more people will be forced from homes. The questions on this questionnaire are leading and should be challenged. If this exercise is used to justify further support reductions, I will regard my Councillors in Marine ward as doing a poor job.</p>
<p>The .gov website states that people who have chronic illness mental or physical should not pay council tax at all. Why are we being penalised for something we can do nothing about?</p>
<p>It is far too onerous a burden to ask a struggling individual to find £260 a year on top of all their other commitments, and it can be very difficult to claim exemption. Raising council tax by less than one percent would return similar amounts without placing undue stress on those in our society LEAST able to handle it. Please reconsider your position, and ask yourself what kind of a society you want us to have</p>
<p>I was disgusted when Worthing imposed payments on people receiving benefits. £260 a year is a huge amount for people who have very little to start with. It is very hard for people to claim back this money once it has been taken so why make people go through this? I would be happy to have a rise in my own council tax, I am not happy to hit the poorest harder.</p>
<p>The current £5 per week restriction for all is wrong and should be scrapped in the name of social justice. People on housing benefit and universal credit cannot afford to pay £20 a month or £260 a year as they are already struggling and on the bread line as it is (hence the need for food banks). The questions in this consultation form are misleading as it is very difficult for people who can't afford CT to claim the money back or get any additional support. People who can't afford to pay Council tax should not have to pay, those who can afford it should which is why Council tax should be raised by 1% instead</p>
<p>I am permanently disabled & have to pay this £5 a week PLUS bedroom tax out of my DLA which means I can no longer afford to pay for extra help which is where the money is supposed to go. It is criminal to subject people like myself to these taxes!! There should be automatic exclusions for people that can not change their circumstances, it's not my fault that I'm disabled & of 'working age', one box does not fit all cases!!</p>
<p>£5 per week is enough to be taken out of people's benefit</p>

<p>I would like to complain about the atrocious wording of both questions in this consultation. Both questions are too brief, do not define the terms they use (nor is this given in the introduction to the survey), and are worded so as to invite particular answers.</p> <p>Question 1 about whether the current restriction should be kept: i) the inclusion of the 2nd part of the sentence 'with extra help' - I object to this as many people who need such help are denied it and in your introductory blurb, you state that people 'may' be helped, so 'with extra support' is misleading, and clearly included to invite an affirmative response to the question. It makes the restriction sound like a good thing! ii) Nowhere is there enough information given about what the situation was before the restriction was imposed, or what it means for people who don't have money to pay council tax.</p> <p>The 2nd question also is meaningless due to the lack of information given about what the HB and Universal credit rules are.....and, again, it is written in a very misleading way so as to invite an affirmative response. There is no reason to believe that a system is better if it uses similar/the same rules to other benefits, just for the sake of being the same. No-one would argue with the last part of the sentence 'so that people understand the rules', so again, the question is written in a very leading way.</p> <p>In light of the language used in this consultation, I believe that the results are not meaningful and should be scrapped and re-written.</p> <p>I would like a response to this complaint.</p> <p>Thank you Katy</p>
<p>This questionnaire is worded in a biased way that prevents respondents expressing their disagreement with its ethos. I do not want those who need to claim help with paying their council tax to be penalised - if they need financial help they should receive it!</p>
<p>A scheme which gets poorer people to subsidise the better off is not a fair scheme</p>
<p>These questions are so very leading in order to try and get people to answer the way you want them to!</p>
<p>I'm finding it very difficult to keep up with payments and I really can't pay this Council Tax. I only claim JSA, sometimes I don't even eat. I have no other help. This needs to change</p>
<p>Appointments should be available to present documents. Waits can be very long and I have felt uncomfortable and anxious around some other customers</p>
<p>Yes</p>
<p>I would like to see the exemption for Council Tax re-instated as it previously was for the disabled people on long term sickness benefits. For example those with minimal savings who are unlikely to be able to return to work. Also the unemployed trying to manage on £72 approx per week should not have to pay. I would like to see a return to Council Tax liability of zero for the above people on means tested benefits as it was for Income Support claimants on Council Tax Benefit.</p>
<p>No £5 charge whatsoever</p>

END