

Local Support for Council Tax Consultation

Total number of responses to date: 137

Are you?

	No.	%
Local resident	129	94.2%
Council employee	3	2.2%
Councillor	2	1.5%
Local business	2	1.5%
Stakeholder (e.g Police, NHS Trust, housing associations, community & voluntary groups, Town/Parish Councils)	1	0.7%
Other	0	0.0%
	137	

Do you currently receive Local Support for Council Tax?

	No.	%
Yes	13	9.6%
No	121	89.0%
Prefer not to say	2	1.5%
	136	

About the Scheme for 2016/17

Currently all working age customers pay a minimum of 10% of their Council Tax. For 2016/17 we are proposing that all working age customers pay at least 12.5% or 15% of their Council Tax, basing any entitlement to Local Support for Council Tax on a maximum of either 87.5% or 85% of Council Tax liability.

Do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

	No.	%
Strongly Agree	55	40.1%
Agree	39	28.5%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	10	7.3%
Disagree	16	11.7%
Strongly Disagree	16	11.7%
Don't know/no opinion	1	0.7%
	137	

If you agree with this proposal, which of the following options do you prefer?

	No.	%
All working age customers should pay at least 12.5% of their Council Tax	30	32.3%
All working age customers should pay at least 15% of their Council Tax	63	67.7%
	93	

Do you agree with the proposal that claims for Local Support for Council Tax can be backdated for a maximum of 4 weeks, in line with the Housing Benefit regulation changes from April 2016?

	No.	%
Strongly Agree	39	28.5%
Agree	52	38.0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	17	12.4%

Disagree	17	12.4%
Strongly disagree	11	8.0%
Don't know/no opinion	1	0.7%
	137	

Do you agree with the proposal that we exclude the family premium in calculating Local Support for Council Tax for new customers or existing customers who become responsible for a child for the first time, in line with the Housing Benefit regulations changes from April 2016?

	No.	%
Strongly Agree	29	21.2%
Agree	47	34.3%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	22	16.1%
Disagree	18	13.1%
Strongly disagree	15	10.9%
Don't know/no opinion	6	4.4%
	137	

If you have any proposals or comments about the LSCT scheme, please use the space below:

not this time

Tax those who are eligible to work, but who do not. Not those who work or are retired.

I would like the council to keep to the 10% as currently. Any reduction in LSCT means people on low incomes would have to pay more from the benefits that are supposed to buy their essentials.

The unequal treatment inherent in failure to Exclude Family Premium for existing claims is a weakness of this proposal. Consider transition to exclusion of existing claims over a period of 3 years.

Once again these new proposals are hitting the poorer members of society

There is little point in fining people who fail to pay council tax as they are already the ones who can't pay and have arrears, according to debt advice charities.

An increase of 2.5% in 2016/17 is fair and should be followed by a similar increase in 2017/18. Such an increase hardly equates to the annual amount that many many people will spend on tobacco, alcohol, mobile phones etc! The problem I would envisage is agreeing a strategy that ensures payment of any Council Tax and I would imagine that many thousands of unpaid money has already been written off

The LSCT is a vital contribution to those who are unfortunate to be either on basic pension or otherwise unable to fully commit themselves to work ie-- they may have a slight or severe disability which prevents them from gainful employment. Single parents should be assessed on their ability to provide for their offspring, any financial payment should be made for the first offspring then a sliding scale of benefits applied to further children.

I feel there are better ways for the council to deal with this issue, rather than inflicting further financial hardship on those that can afford it the least. It seems to be the way now that the easiest solution is to affect those who need the help the most. There are numerous alternatives that the council could consider like increasing the council tax on those living in the higher bands, subject to financial assessment to ensure they can actually afford it. There has to be cost cutting measures within the council that can take place as well as looking at where the council spends its money, including the subsidies it pays out to the Stephen Joseph Theatre every year. People on low incomes face reductions in tax credits next year, in some cases up to £1500 or more per year, the council needs to ask if these families can afford to lose even more support and how much it will additionally cost to recover unpaid council tax through the courts when people cannot afford to pay.

Working people who live in a property where the Council Tax is paid by someone else e.g. the parents should pay an additional amount. The Council Tax should be levied on the people who benefit from the Council services not levied against properties.

4 weeks is a bit of a mean period for people to find out their entitlement and make a claim.

I feel strongly that people who cannot work, i.e. people on disability benefits should be exempt from these increases

I think everyone should pay full council tax on their property even if they are a single person. As a couple we spend twice as much in town etc contributing to the local economy.

People receiving disability allowance should be exempt from reductions in LSCT support, but other changes (backdating and additional children) should be applied.

Don't be ridiculous. Everyone is poorer as it is already. We're in a huge decline in real wages and everyone is skint. Stop it.

I can't afford to pay 10% at the moment, which is £9 per month. I often have no choice but to pay this late and am surprised by the heavy handed bully boy tactics that the council uses against those who are two or three weeks late. If this rises to 12.5% or 15% I will not be paying any more - you will have to send me to prison. If the council can't cut any more spending then the obvious thing to do would be to rise council tax for all, rather than raising council tax for the unemployed, poor, vulnerable and disabled. I will not be voting for any councillor that increases the amount paid under the LCST to 12.5% or 15%. One final suggestion: don't spend £100,000 on the Tour de Yorkshire.

Any increase to the amount claimants like myself have to pay towards council tax will cause huge financial hardship and distress, particularly if there is also an increase to the council tax bills. How the council and government expect people on benefits to be able to continue paying increases in council tax is beyond me as things are hard enough as it is. I, and many others will either not be able to pay their bill at all or we will have to choose between eating properly or keeping warm in order to find the extra money for the council tax. I have long term health conditions and My health will be made worse if I have to divert money from my food or electric bill. This is not right and the council need to realise the impact any reduction in LSCT will have on the poorest in this town. I would support, however, any increase in financial penalties for those who fail to notify that they are no longer entitled to benefits.

why is it that the disabled are targeted to get more money out of when we don't have it yet pensioners who are better off get off paying their share its wrong we need help not more debt

Single working age claimants in receipt of JSA receive £73.10 a week, whereas the minimum income guaranteed for Pension Credit age residents is £151.20, more than twice the amount of JSA, yet people who receive Guarantee Pension Credit have automatic entitlement to full LSCT, so pay no council tax. JSA is not set to rise for the foreseeable future, whereas the state pension and Pension Credit will go up next April, as usual. The proposal to increase the council tax liability of working age people by 25 or 50 percent by cutting LSCT is grossly unfair and inequitable. It will put more people into poverty and debt, they will have to choose between paying council tax and heating or eating. As a benefits adviser working with the over 50s, I meet so many Pension Credit age clients who would be happy to pay more, so that younger people would not be penalised for being jobless. To withdraw the family premium for new LSCT claims will affect so many children in this borough - the last government worked to try and eradicate child poverty, this measure will significantly set this objective back, and parents will be faced with having to decide whether to pay council tax or feed their children. The effect of the proposed changes will, inevitably, cause an increase in the use of food banks, school breakfast clubs, crime, and non payment of council tax. People living on low incomes and benefits often have mental health issues, such as depression: pushing them deeper into poverty can only exacerbate such conditions, and place further stress on the health service and mental health charities. Once again it is the very poorest who will suffer - I would be happy to pay more council tax, rather than see either of these measures implemented.

I am deeply disappointed that the council would look to find savings by targeting those who are least well off. They have suffered enough and need help not punishment. In the short term, I believe those who are richest in our community should pay more council tax. I also feel Scarborough should join with other councils to challenge the government's cuts to council budgets. They are destructive and unfair. With massive inequality it is disgraceful that our public services are being stripped away.

As a resident I support the financial assistance given to those eligible for "assistance".

Residents are already experiencing drastic cuts in income due to the Welfare Reforms. The Local authority should be doing their best to support the residents in the borough, even if it means using their reserves.

The amount to be paid should be reflected in the ability to pay. For low-paid workers, several hundred pounds a year can be hard to find, so an increase would need to be small

Should the Council reduce funding to other services to help pay for the scheme?

	No.	%
Strongly agree	8	5.9%
Agree	19	14.0%
Disagree	45	33.1%
Strongly disagree	53	39.0%
Don't know/No opinion	11	8.1%
	136	

Should the Council use its reserves to help pay for the scheme?

	No.	%
Strongly agree	10	7.3%
Agree	27	19.7%
Disagree	46	33.6%
Strongly disagree	44	32.1%
Don't know/No opinion	10	7.3%
	137	

Should the Council increase Council Tax to help pay for the scheme?

	No.	%
Strongly agree	13	9.5%
Agree	24	17.5%
Disagree	37	27.0%
Strongly disagree	58	42.3%
Don't know/No opinion	5	3.6%
	137	

Should the Council impose a financial penalty where someone fails to tell the Council that they are no longer entitled to a discount or exemption?

	No.	%
Strongly agree	65	47.8%
Agree	50	36.8%
Disagree	12	8.8%
Strongly disagree	6	4.4%
Don't know/No opinion	3	2.2%
	136	

Additional Proposals and Comments....

Do you have any other proposals or comments?

not this time

I'm very proud of Scarborough and understand the constraints put upon the council, however, there is only so much you take away from the low income earners so, whilst I think that everyone should pay their way, there is a limit. The council attract great entertainment, make Scarborough a pleasure to visit and generate a lot of revenue for local businesses. I think, if there is any sector of 'payees' that we have, it should be the businesses that have benefited immensely from the efforts put in by the council. Of course, there will be a lot of resistance but they are in a better position to pay than those on very low incomes.

The bigger picture is the long term need to create a better local economy. That would mean fewer people on low incomes and more council income from business rates etc.

You can't keep increasing the council tax and punishing the working to subsidise short falls or support LCST. Impose penalties as failing to tell the council is fraud.

My answers indicate a preference to increase the council tax rate, however this does not take in to account the penalties for taking this route. In summary all options are difficult and I would support the decision of those who have to make it.

Anything done by the Council to deter those on benefit staying/coming to the area should be enshrined in the Council's overall strategy for economic development. Put simply, the Council should strive to attract people to the area who have sufficient wealth/income to pay full Council Tax/spend money with local businesses. By minimising/abolishing LSCT those who make little or no financial contribution will be encouraged to move to other richer Council Areas, Scarborough needs to focus on quality not quantity.

The LSCT savings on which we are being consulted represent a very small proportion of the shortfall which is not clearly stated in the consultation. Although I do not object strongly to any of the proposed economies, I do not believe that the saving outweighs the likely hardship and therefore the saving represents poor value for money. At some point it was decided that the LSCT groups needed this support. I prefer to increase council tax in order to sustain it.

Not really, but I am not convinced that the council does not waste vast amounts of money in other ways. These should openly discussed with the population also.

If someone claims a benefit that they know they not entitled to, there must be a sanction.

Of course I would not condone any cheating in the system but cases where you impose financial penalties on people should be made individually with a real attempt to come to a realistic repayment system. If somebody hasn't paid because they can't pay, their debt grows bigger with no benefit to the council's funds and, indeed, incurs expenses in recovery fees. (Lawyers and bailiffs) Councillors should lead the way in cost cutting - particularly when 2 reside at the same address and claim twice for allowances for the Internet etc and councillors who are also on NYCC claiming allowances from both bodies.

I believe there are a large number of people who do not pay their Council Tax, I don't mean the people who need support, I think they are people who should pay. If those people were made an example of and paid like the rest of us, the Council would have fewer problems.

Maybe this matter has been oversimplified to achieve the required support for increasing Council Taxes. I think that Councils' working a few more hours per week and a less generous pension might be more appropriate. The private sector is way behind the public sector for employment conditions, in so many instances. Mugging Parish Councils to pay for grass cutting is totally inappropriate, when govt. funds have been made available to maintain the public highway in its entirety. Is this what George Osborne means when he says "the Tories are the party of rural Britain". Building more homes for Immigrants on our Green Belt and then more subsidising Council Tax is completely unacceptable to most existing residents. Thank You.

Highly unlikely that the imposition of a financial penalty would work if those involved are already prepared to try and escape payment of the correct amount. The cost of monitoring this could be prohibitive. Increasing Council Tax, whilst reducing services, will be viewed as unacceptable (if inevitable!) since everyone is being targeted in order to pay for a particular group of individuals. There exists already an enormous variation and discrepancy in the amount of Council Tax that is paid by residents, probably as a result of when the property was assessed for tax purposes. For example, I pay more Council Tax for a two-bedroomed flat than many owners of large houses in the Town.

I do not believe you should reduce one to prop up another all you are doing is causing decent at the point where you are reducing it's funding, you should look at your accounts to see where all our tax is going and make cuts at this point, the amount of automobiles to me is an obvious start, as the number of vehicles driving around the town with the town logo is ridiculous, oh yes and while on the subject reduce the amount of Police vehicles no wonder the police force are no longer fit enough.

Provided a reasonable amount of time has been given

It would be an illogical course to take to impose more money problems on those who are eligible for financial assistance, how would the council go about collecting fines? If that was the intended proposal. Surely it would be simpler to reduce, or stop altogether any benefits for a period of time, rather than trying to penalise through the courts. which would obviously be the case if the proposal was carried through.

Give the families that the support a break and find other ways to plug the gap, we all know the council can do this.

At all times, when considering council tax income/adjustments, it is hoped that staffing levels and other administrative costs are under continual careful review.

I feel that, from the options presented, the council does not want to provide any support whatsoever from reserves; why not? Who knows what the national/international financial situation will be in 12 months time therefore it is presumptuous of the council to negatively label the use of reserves. If a client fails to inform the council of a non-entitlement to benefits/discounts it has, to my knowledge, been an offence and must be treated as such

Instead of cutting the existing spending please look at ways of attracting more people to spend more money in the town. For example drop all car parking charges for 4 hours each day. Take a circle around the town and at a certain date get all businesses to report their turnover. At the end of the year get them to report again. The turnover figures should be higher and they could contribute some of this towards the loss of car parking revenue. The Council will also save the costs of maintaining the car park charging and policing infrastructure. Why not try it? If it doesn't work think again. Look at the planning strategy. Change the rules on people converting good accommodation into bed sits. This attracts the wrong kind of people who have brought some areas of the town into disrepute and it works against attracting visitors. The tourist people working at the Council need to put a greater emphasis on Scarborough being a nice and friendly place to visit. Free parking and clean streets can go a long way to support this strategy.

It's common knowledge that there is a tendency for some people claiming benefit not to report changes in circumstances straight away as the LA has a tendency not to take action

Everyone should make some contribution to Local taxation as a commitment to citizenship. There should be an appeals process re this last question.

We think the council tax should be increased by the allowed amount year by year but not to fund the scheme, but to help the town in other areas. You should look closely at the fire service to save money. If there are less fires and emergencies then the services should be contracted. Perhaps there are properties that could be rented out. You should increase the powers of parking attendants to fine people for litter (including cigarette butts and food).

If Scarborough as a Town (not necessarily the Council), continues to attract people who choose to be lifelong claimants and the retirees, then the few remaining residents who do work, will always have to take the brunt of increased Council tax bills.

Please see comments above. I would consider a cut in the number of councillors and/or reducing the costs of IT equipment for councillors such as the latest iPads, tablets etc. These are an extravagant waste of money when a good laptop would suffice. The cuts need to start in house before cutting vital services.

make the system more fairer rather than going after people who can't afford to pay

The system for identifying who should pay what should be robust but simply dishing out fines to those already struggling is cruel and will ultimately cost us more.

Council tax is a major outgoing in this household. We are not entitled to any help so this does make me somewhat prejudiced against claimants. Nevertheless we all need to pay more

No

Tick boxes are usually inadequate. The answer to the above is yes, if done dishonestly but no, if a genuine error or misunderstanding. Regarding an earlier question as to whether other services should be reduced to pay for the scheme - that is too general; which services may be involved in cuts?
