

~~Appendix A~~

Appendix B

**South Holland District Council
Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25
Consultation Report**

“You Said, We Listened”

Introduction to this consultation

1. This report contains the responses we received for the Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25 consultation which took place between 15th November and 29th December 2023.
2. The exercise was performed to gain the views of residents on the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme for the 2024/25 financial year.

Methodology

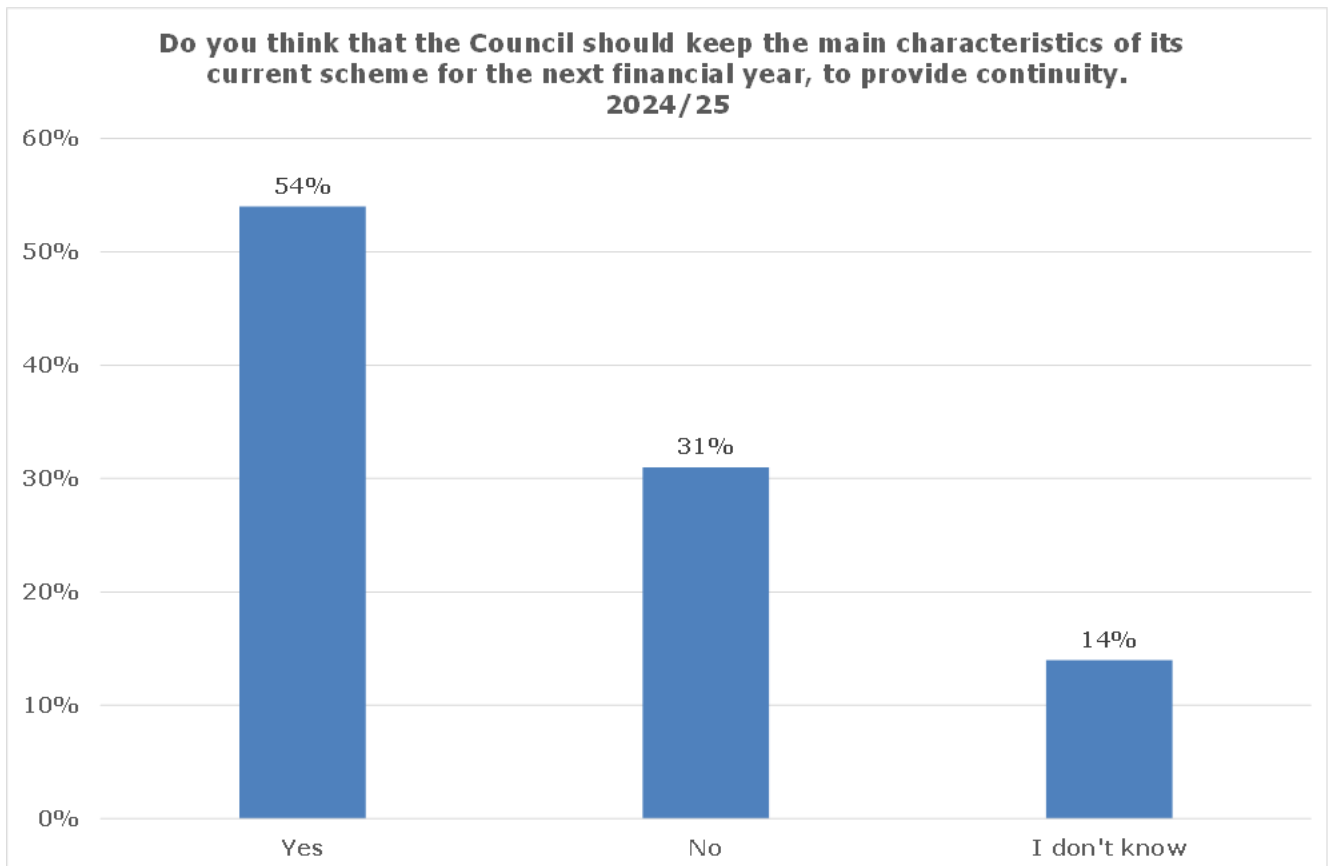
3. The consultation, which was available in both hard copy and online, was promoted in a number of ways.
 - A media release was circulated announcing the proposals for the Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25. The media release also provided residents with details of the consultation exercise being undertaken and details of how to complete or request a copy of the consultation.
 - A letter was forwarded to precepting Authorities on 15th November 2023, inviting them to give their views on the proposals for 2024/25.
 - Social media; Facebook and Twitter were also used to inform residents that the consultation exercise was being undertaken.
 - A homepage banner was placed on South Holland District Council's website to draw attention to the consultation.
 - Paper questionnaires were made available on request.
 - The questionnaire was also made available for people to complete on the Council's website.
4. It should be noted that base data has been rounded to the nearest number (so may add up to between 99% and 101%).

Response Rate

5. 35 electronic responses were received.
6. In addition, written responses were received from Lincolnshire County Council and the Lincolnshire Police and Crime Commissioner. Their responses are detailed at numbers 13 and 14 in this report.

Results and Analysis

7. All respondents were asked if they thought that the Council should keep the main characteristics of its scheme for the next financial year, to retain continuity. The chart below shows that 54% of all respondents thought the Council should retain its current scheme; 31% of all respondents thought the Council 'should not' retain its current scheme for the next financial year, with the remaining 14% stating that they 'did not know' if the Council should retain its current scheme for the next financial year.



8. All respondents were given the opportunity to provide comments about keeping the main characteristics of the current Council Tax Support scheme for the next financial year. A number of respondents said that they would not be able to afford an increase in Council Tax due to the cost of living. Two respondents felt that it was important to support those on low incomes and those most vulnerable. Two questions were asked but no personal details were requested in the survey therefore these are unable to be answered directly. One respondent suggested that a minimum amount should be given by the Council. There were also a few general comments relating to individuals' circumstances. A full list of comments are included below:

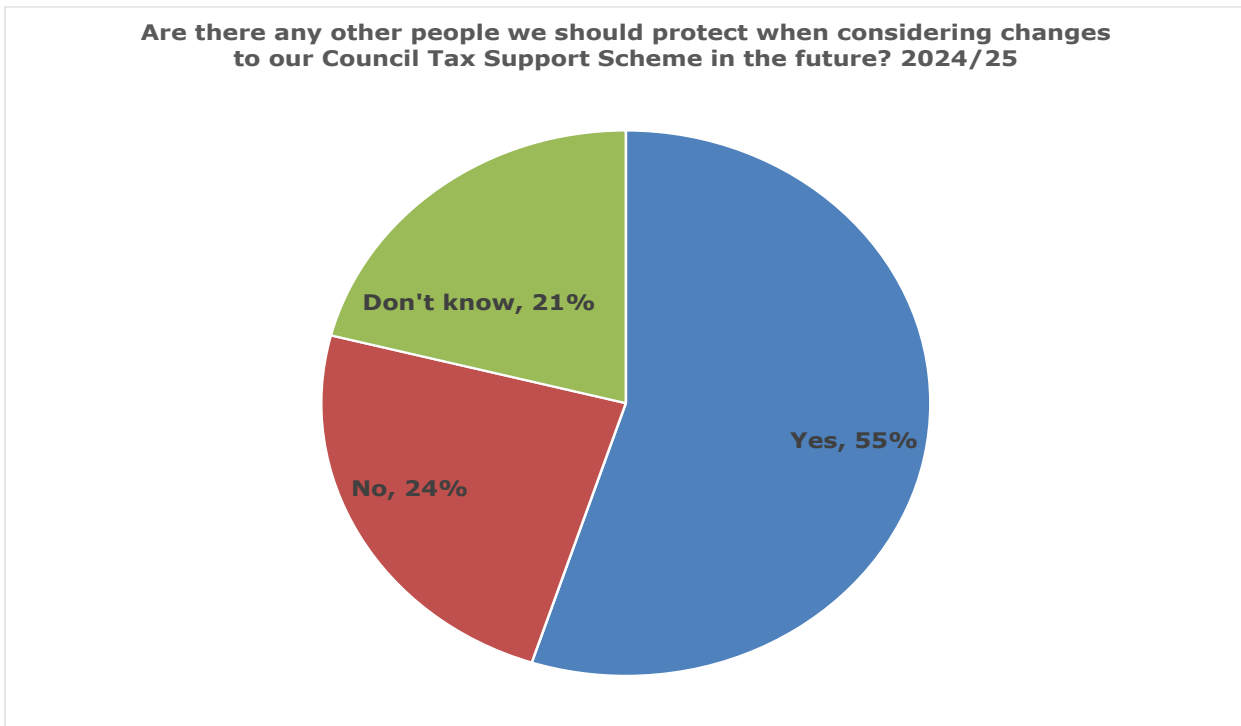
- Retired people really need this help and support as they cannot increase their low income.
- People are struggling and need help
- Consider having a minimum amount rather than a percentage.
- Why can't people on the lowest incomes and therefore most vulnerable have 100% support?
- It is important to support those in need however, the scheme should be considered as a reason not to find employment for those who are able and fit to
- It seems to be a fair method to support those in need.
- I think those working on low income, single parents, households with SEN children, adults should get a reduction
- I work and am on a low income and receive Universal Credits to top up my wages. I have a 14-year-old child and am the only adult in my household. I get the 25% single persons allowance but that's all and I'm struggling with the rise with the cost of living. I'm in a band A home but my Council Tax is

still over £80 a month with the single person discount. I don't know if I'm entitled to a bigger reduction (I doubt it), but some advice and support would be greatly appreciated. I didn't know things may be changed and I wouldn't be able to pay my Council Tax without going without other essentials of this was stopped. So, I don't feel well enough informed to decide as to whether things should be changed as it may mean I'll be worse off. Thank you.

- Currently, working aged people on low income, but not claiming any other benefits, are eligible for Council Tax Support. I would wish this to continue. So much other help is dependent on claiming other benefits. I am 64 and managing on a very small works pension while I am my mother's carer. She is 90, arthritic but keeps her independence in her own home because I am available daily to assist with opening food jars, being present when workmen visit (e.g., for house repairs, boiler servicing) and recently for a mobility shop to deliver and adjust a walker as she can no longer climb into the car to be taken to the shop. We do not claim carer's allowance as she can, cook, wash herself (in a walk-in bath) and dress herself (it takes ages, determination overcoming arthritic fingers). With the fuel increases the Council Tax Support makes a big difference to me, allowing me to (just) manage. I am not eligible for my state pension until February 2025 so please don't change the rules to exclude my modest claim to Council Tax Support (I live in an A Band Victorian terraced house). Thank you for this opportunity to express my opinion on the Scheme.
- This type of support for pensioners, those with disabilities and working families struggling financially, is essential. There should be no need for debate.
- Weed out the work shy.
- The elderly and disabled people on benefits shouldn't have to pay anything towards it, also more should be done about the very outdated bin system and wheelie bins provided to customers or better-quality bin bags as the bin bags split continuously
- I'm on low income with universal credit a child and another on the way yet have been denied any help with our Council Tax and yet we keep falling into missed payments and struggling to pay our bills. I don't think enough support is provided at all
- I think this should be abolished and everyone should be paying the same
- Is there any support for builders who have to pay Council Tax on completed houses waiting to sell
- I think regular checks should be made to ensure those claiming are intact eligible, and I think it should be time restrained, i.e., maximum of three years for those who are able to work but seem unable to find employment even though there is plenty of factories advising job vacancies. Unfortunately, I think it's too easy for some to choose their current lifestyle
- I was on universal credits after the death of my husband 20 months ago. without the reduction made from this support scheme the Council Tax would have been half the universal credits payment. I was made a widow and unemployed at the same time as a full-time carer for my husband, I was 61 years old, and not now of pensionable age, as now have to be 67 to receive state pension, I did not receive any part of my husband's state pension as his

widow. I now am employed 21 hours a week, but without tax support scheme it would be extremely difficult to make full payments.

9. The pie chart below shows that just over half (55%) of all respondents thought there were other people the Council should protect when considering changes to its Council Tax Support Scheme in the future. It also shows that 24% of all respondents thought that there were not any other people the Council should protect when considering changes to its Council Tax Support Scheme in the future. The remaining 21% stated that they 'did not know'.



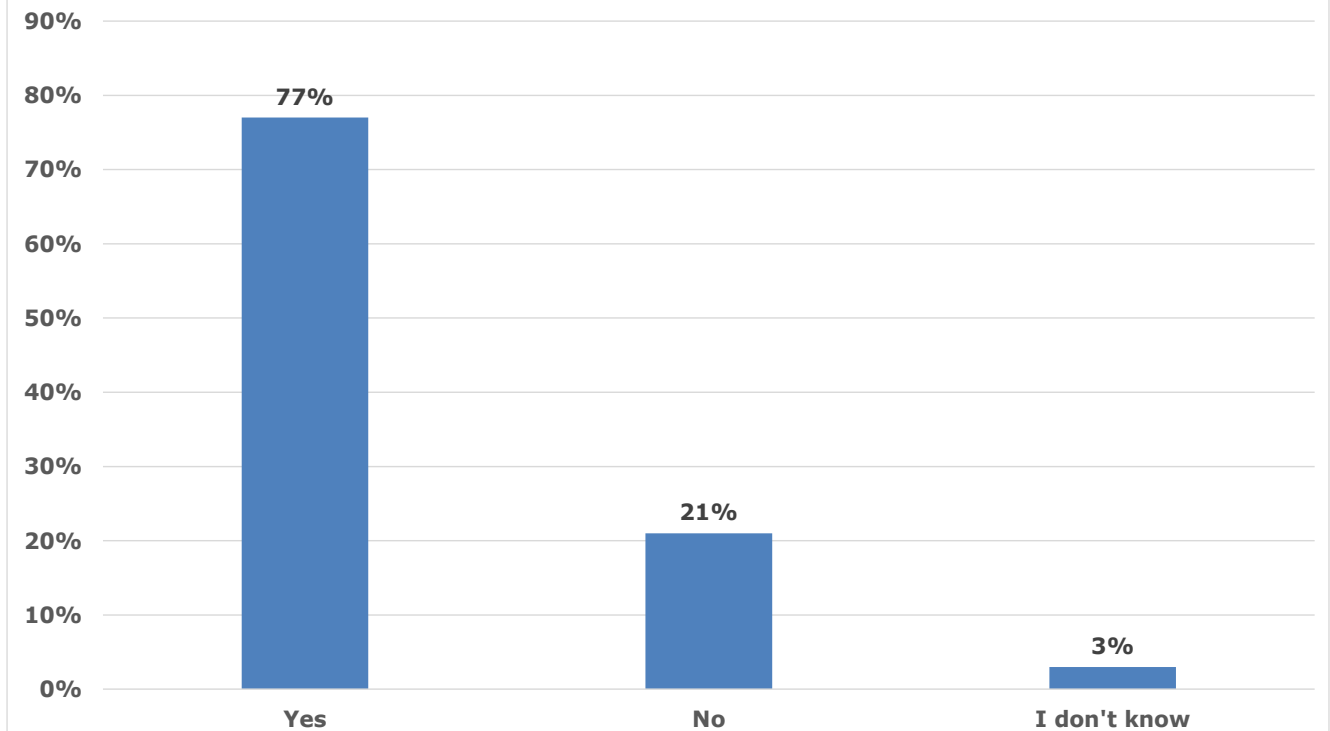
10. Those respondents that thought there were other people the Council should protect were asked who. Seven respondents thought that disabled people or people in receipt of PIP or Disability Living Allowance should be protected. Two respondents thought that terminally ill people should be protected. A few people suggested that people on low incomes and those on benefits should be protected. A full list is detailed below.
- People living with someone else who has no income.
 - Disabled
 - Disabled additional needs including mental ill health. Households with children, especially households with additional needs children. If the child attends a special school, the household should automatically receive a Council Tax reduction.
 - People on disability benefits such as PIP
 - Unpaid carers who care for a member of their household who receives dla/pip
 - Working families not just those that don't have jobs
 - People who live alone but cannot work because they care for someone and are in receipt of Carers Allowance.

- I think people just above the threshold for help. A discount would not need to be so low, but some discount would be a massive help for people like myself on a low wage, and on universal credit.
- Single parents, Low-income, Special needs
- Disabled
- Low income, benefits, and elderly
- Pensioners and low-income benefits
- Dementia, terminally ill
- Builders why does an empty house waiting to sell using no services have to pay Council tax
- Terminally ill
- Those in receipt of PIP and other disability benefits
- Households where both adults are on enhanced daily pip. They have this for a reason. Also enhanced mobility.

11. All respondents were advised that each year the Government reviews and generally increases the amount people need to live on for the calculation of welfare benefit and that by applying the same changes to South Holland District Council's Council Tax Support scheme it would ensure that the scheme remains up to date with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) allowances and premiums each year. They were then asked if they thought the Council should increase its scheme in line with the Department for Work and Pensions provisions for 2024/25 and future years.

The chart below shows that 77% of all respondents thought that the Council should increase its scheme in line with the Department for Work and Pensions provisions for 2024/25 and future years; 21% thought the Council 'should not' increase its scheme in line with the Department of Works and Pensions provisions for 2024/25 and future years; with the remaining 3% of all respondents stating that they 'did not know'.

Each year the Government reviews and generally increases the amount people need to live on for the calculation of welfare benefit and that by applying the same changes to South Holland District Council's Council Tax Support scheme it would ensure that th



12. All respondents were asked if they had any other comments to make. One respondent felt that more people needed help, and another commented that all support and rent should be in line with benefits. A further respondent said that retired people in rented accommodation were struggling with their rent increases. There was a comment from one person stating that they thought this area of the Council was justified and worthwhile. A full list of comments are detailed below:

- People who rent in retirement are struggling with rent increases.
- If you the scheme is flexible, you could pay more than DWP propose. Have you considered paying more?
- I understand the requirement for support, but it shouldn't be so easy to get the support. There are plenty of high enough income jobs in the area so if people wanted a level of income, it could be attained.
- As I mentioned before due to not having the relevant information, I can't make an informed decision and as I don't personally know what the DWP provisions are for 2024/25 I may end up being in a worse financial crisis without the support if I even qualify for it?!
- This is one area I feel the Council spend is both justified and worthwhile. Unlike some other projects/wastefulness that almost beggar belief.
- Stop giving money to immigrants.
- Absolutely all support and rent should be in line with benefits and also families who have separated should be entitled to more than one bedroom property because it's very difficult to have children stay when only one room is available

- More people need helping we certainly need help yet have been told we don't qualify for help
- I wrote to SHDC 3 weeks ago expressing outrage at the payment of council tax on empty new properties. No reply yet!!!!
- I'm a pensioner and my pension increase does not reflect the increase in cost of living. I don't appear to receive the same increase in pension as those on welfare benefits but have to manage the increases.
- Council Tax payments and the available help is not easily accessible to those who are in distress without help from family or friend. This, unlike credit card dept, can be brought against an individual and then made bankrupt. How can this be right when we all want to pay but find in certain circumstances unable to cope. Could this be looked at to change this, as was done for credit card dept?

Responses from precepting authorities

13. A response was received from the Office of the Lincolnshire Police and Crime Commissioner confirming that they noted South Holland District Council's proposal to retain the current scheme, aligned to the DWP uprating of allowances and premiums.
14. A response was also received from Lincolnshire County Council stating that as a major preceptor, any changes to the scheme proposed by the district can have a significant impact on the Council Tax income received by Lincolnshire County Council. The County Council is supportive of South Holland District Council's proposal, which is to retain the current local scheme, up rated in line with changes applied by DWP.

Contact:

For more information relating to this report contact:

- Jackie Todd, Consultation Officer at jackie.todd@e-lindsey.gov.uk or 01507 601111