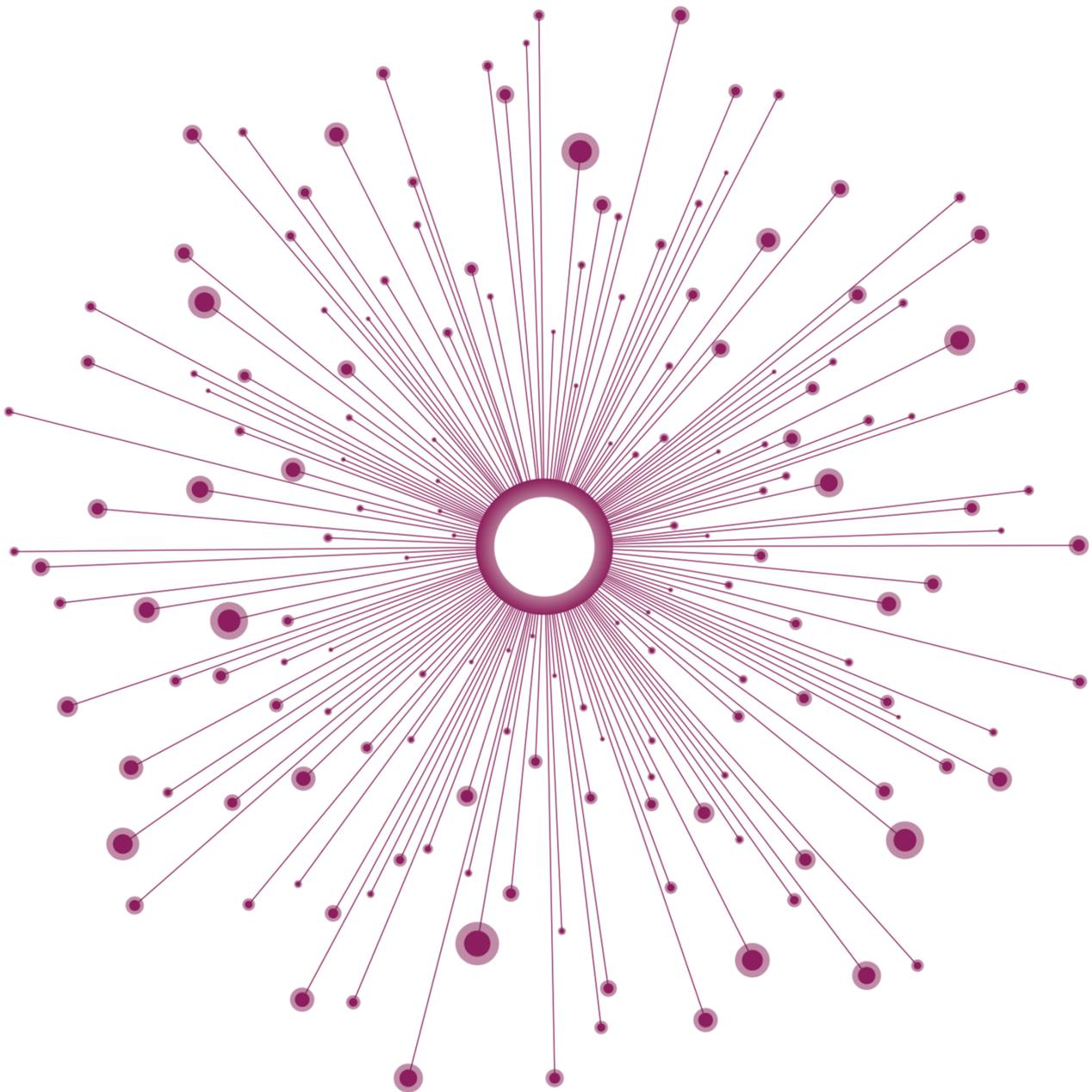


# Appendix 2c: Council Tax Reduction Scheme Consultation 2018

October 2018



In:fusion

Blackpool Council

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## 1. Executive Summary

**45 people responded to the consultation** on proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, including a mix of claimants, non-claimants and pensioners in the borough.

**More respondents agreed than disagreed with all proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.** The highest level of agreement was for ensuring that applicants continue to be protected under Universal Credit once they move from the current scheme. A summary of the level of agreement is shown in the following table.

**Figure 1.1: Summary of agreement levels for each proposal (actual numbers)**

Proposals	Yes	No	Don't know/not sure	Total
<b>Proposal 1: To ensure that all applicants who are protected under the current scheme continue to be protected when they move to Universal Credit</b>	38	2	4	44
<b>Proposal 2: To include additional groups within the 'protected category'</b>	30	11	4	45

## **2. Background and Methodology**

### **2.1. Background**

The council's local Council Tax Reduction Scheme replaced Council Tax Benefits from April 2013. The council's scheme is based on the previous Housing/Council Tax Benefit Scheme, approved by Full Council in December 2012 after consultation was undertaken with residents of Blackpool, the Police, Fire Authority and other interested parties. The old Council Tax Benefit scheme was retained within the local reduction scheme and it has continued to protect pensioners, as prescribed by Central Government.

### **2.2. Methodology**

The council agreed to undertake a consultation with residents and stakeholders in Blackpool to understand what impact, if any, the proposed changes would have on local people and to consider any alternative suggestions. The consultation comprised of an online survey, which was made available on the council website and supported by a range of communication, including an article in the 'Your Blackpool' newsletter for September and covered on Blackpool Council social media pages. In addition, paper copies were made available in public buildings to ensure those residents who do not use the internet could access the consultation. Additionally, surveys were conducted face-to-face in the Customer Frist Centre. The consultation went live in September 2018 and ran for a period of eight weeks.

**45 responses** were received to the consultation survey. Tables and charts within this report refer to actual number of respondents to ensure reliable interpretation of the findings.

### **2.3. Sample**

The following table shows the demographic information of those who responded to the consultation.

**Figure 2.1: Respondent demographic information**

Question options	Number of responses
<b>Does your household receive Council Tax Reduction?</b>	
Yes	25
No	18
Don't know	1
<b>Are you...?</b>	
Male	12
Female	31
Prefer not to say	2
<b>Which age group do you belong to?</b>	
16 to 24	3
25 to 34	8
35 to 44	12
45 to 54	10
55 to 64	8
65 to 74	3
75 to 84	1
<b>Are your day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?</b>	
Yes, limited a lot	8
Yes, limited a little	9
No	26
Prefer not to say	1
<b>What best describes your ethnic background?</b>	
White – British	21
White - Other	7
Asian or Asian British	2
Black or Black British	3

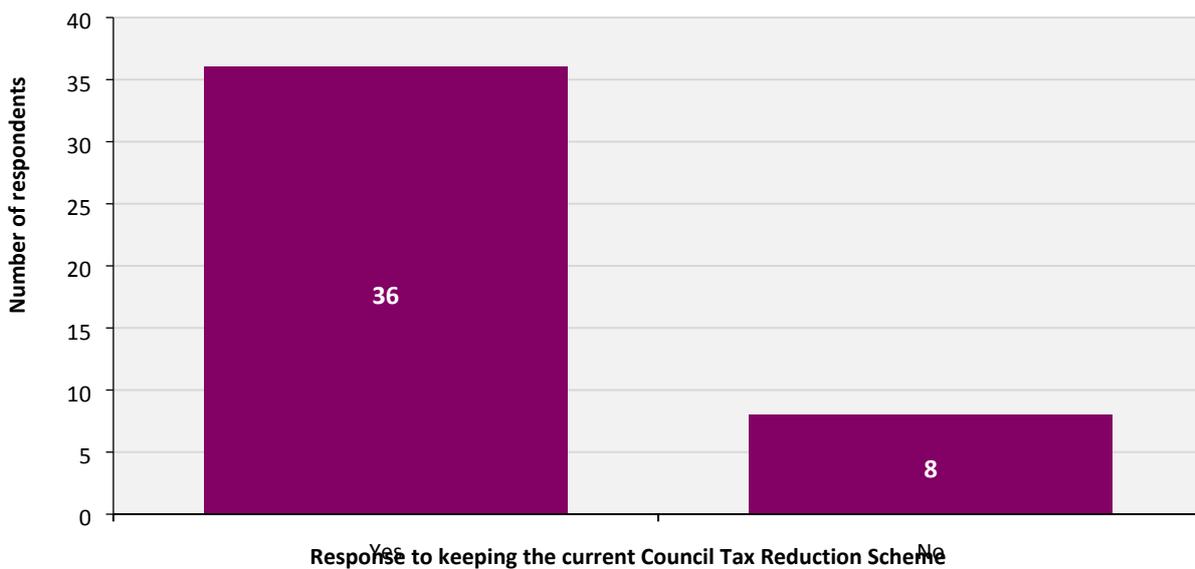
### 3. Main Findings

The consultation included a question asking whether the current Council Tax Reduction scheme should be kept and maintained with the same level of support as it currently has and individual questions on two proposals. For both the initial question and for each of the two proposals respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed and were given the opportunity to explain their response.

#### 3.1. Paying for the scheme

36 of the 45 respondents answered ‘yes’ to the council keeping the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme with 8 respondents answering ‘no’. Current support for keeping the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme is shown in the following figure:

**Figure 3.1: Should the Council keep the current Council Tax Reduction scheme? (Should it continue to administer the scheme and have the same level of support as it does at the moment?) (Base - 44)**



There were seven comments on the protection of the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Two comments further highlighted the need to protect the scheme so that it can support people in low income families and with families with specific needs. One respondent stated the Council Tax Reduction Scheme needs to remain in line with the Housing Benefit Scheme. Another highlighted that the scheme should be reformed to get people off benefits.

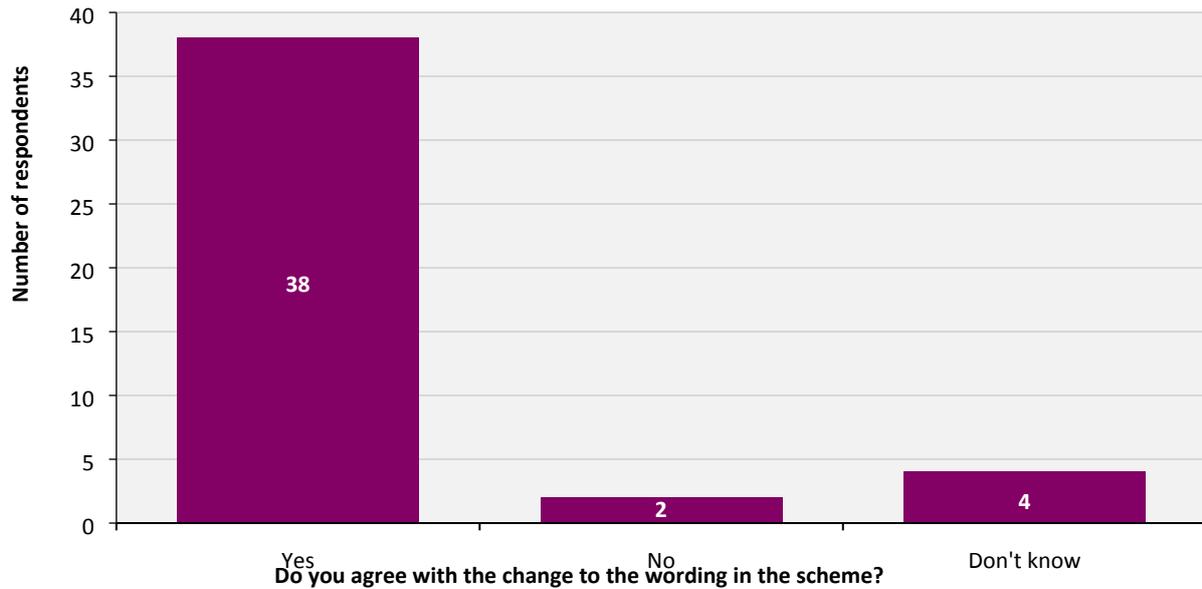
#### 3.2. Proposal 1 – To ensure that all applicants who are protected under the current scheme continue to be protected when they move to Universal Credit

38 respondents to the survey agreed with the proposal to ensure that all applicants who are protected under the current scheme continue to be protected when they move to Universal Credit.

This proposal would provide the same level of protection to certain applicants irrespective of the move to Universal Credit and keep up with any changes in the welfare system.

Two respondents added a comment with one respondent the need for the scheme to remain in line with the Housing Benefit Scheme and other comment expressed concern around the relationship between those receiving benefits and the scheme. The full responses for this proposal is shown in the following figure:

**Figure 3.2: Proposal 1 - Do you agree with the change to the wording in the scheme? (Base - 44)**

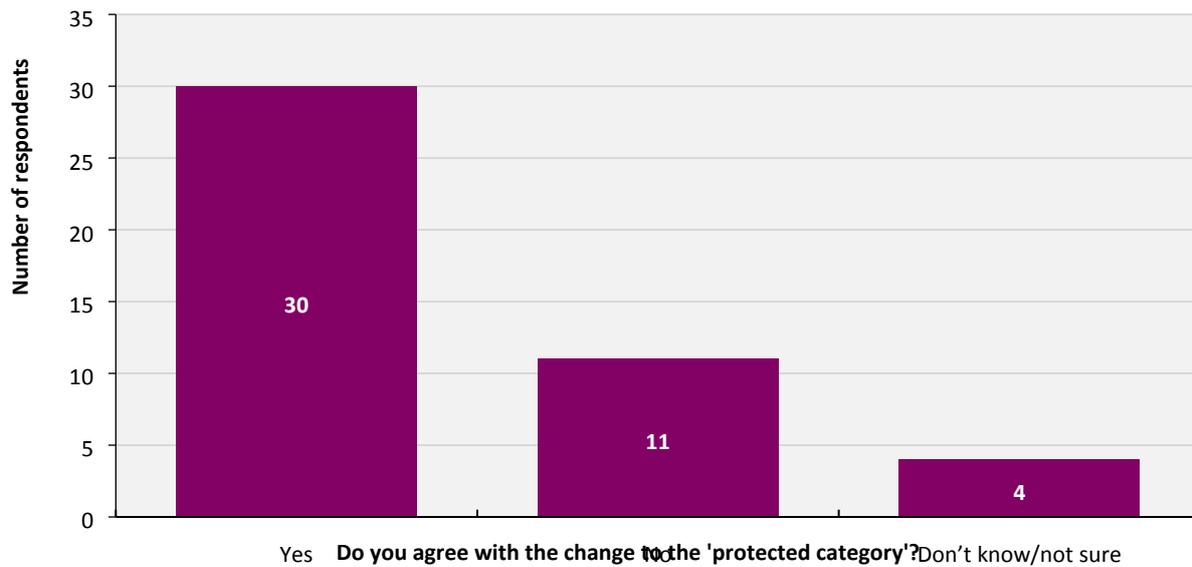


**3.3. Proposal 2 – To include additional groups within the ‘protected category’**

30 respondents agreed with the proposal to include additional groups; applicants/partners in receipt of Jobseeker’s Allowance Contribution, in receipt of Maximum Universal Credit and is neither employed, self-employed or in receipt of any other income affecting their Universal Credit award. Or, in receipt of Main Phase Employment and Support Allowance and are in the Work Related Activity Group within the ‘protected category’.

12 respondents added a comment with five respondents expressing for support for specific groups being added or protected within the ‘protected category’ and four respondents stating the ‘protected category’ groups should be left as they currently are. The full responses for this proposal is shown in the following figure:

**Figure 3.3: Proposal 2 - Do you agree with the change to the wording in the scheme? (Base - 44)**



**3.4. Alternatives to increasing the amount of help provided by the Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

There was an equal level of agreement to an alternative option of not making changes and using any potential savings to potentially reduce the Council Tax or make savings for other Council Services (27% of respondents agreed to both these ideas). Whilst the highest level of disagreement was with not making the changes and retaining any savings for future use (88% of respondents disagreed).

The full responses for support for alternative options is shown in the following table:

**Figure 3.4.1: Alternatives to increasing the amount of help provided by the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Base – 44)**

Alternative options to the proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme	Yes	No	Don't know/not sure	Total
Not make the changes and use any potential savings for other Council Services	12	31	1	44
Not make the changes and use any potential savings to potentially reduce the Council Tax	12	31	1	44
Not make the changes and use any potential savings for future use	3	38	2	43

Looking at the preferences of respondents to alternative options if the council were keep the current scheme. With option one being the most preferable and option three being the least preferable. The option that was most preferable to respondents was using any potential saving for other Council Services (44% chose this as their first option). The alternative option with the least support was for

retaining any potential savings for future use (81% chose this as their least preferred option). The full results for respondents' preferences to alternative options is shown in the following table.

**Figure 3.4.2: Council options order of preference (Base – 43)**

<b>Alternative options to the proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme</b>	<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Option 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Use any potential savings for other Council Services</b>	19	20	4	43
<b>Use any potential savings to potentially reduce the Council Tax</b>	16	13	4	43
<b>Use any potential savings for future use</b>	0	8	35	43

Respondents were asked if there were any other options the council should consider. Four respondents left comments including, one comment stating the council should consider 100% reductions for specific groups and another comment stating that operating hours should be extended to with deal with Council Tax queries.

Looking at whether any respondents had any final comments, one respondent stated that the scheme should be means-tested.