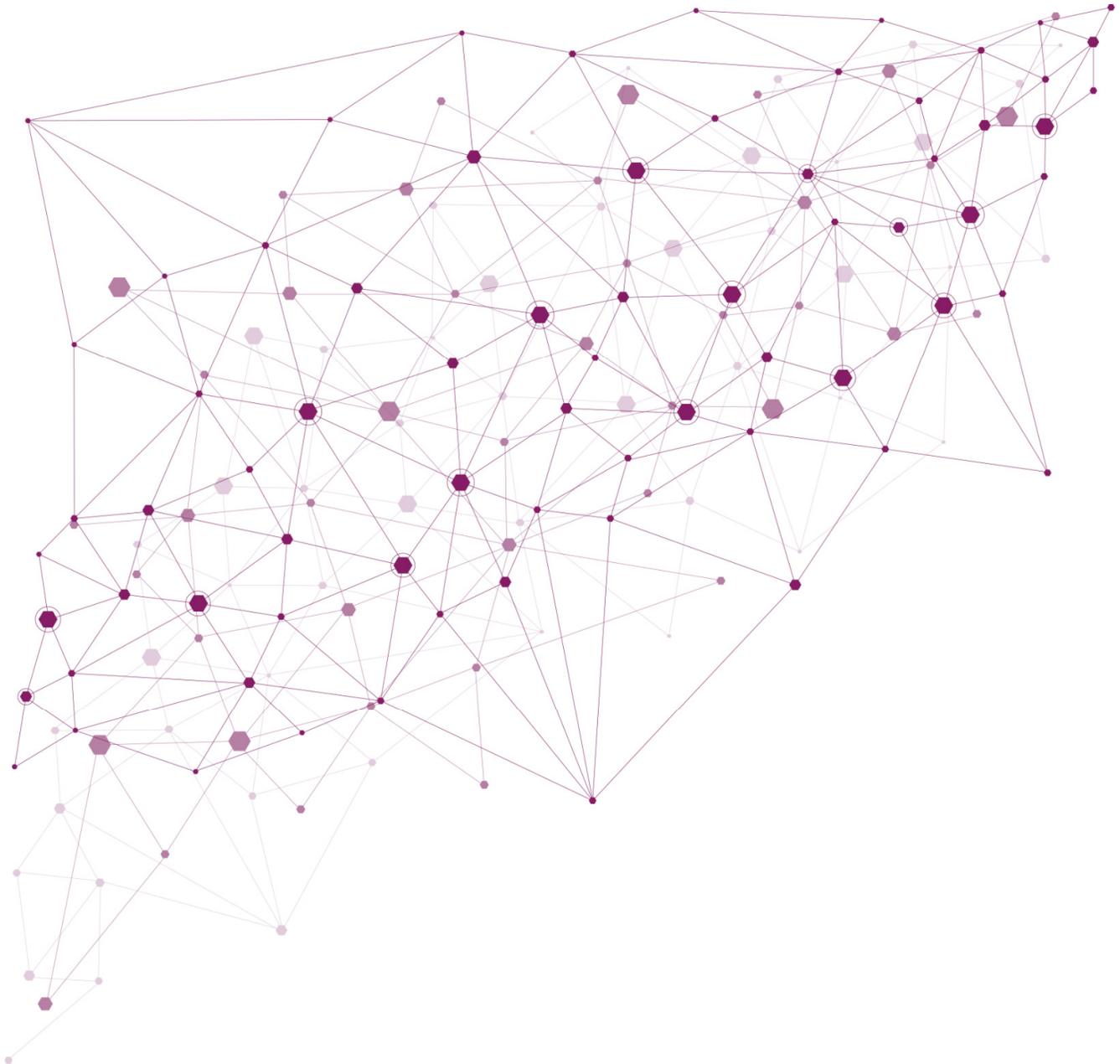


Blackpool Council

Council Tax Reduction Consultation 2017



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1. Executive Summary

25 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 disregarding the new Bereavement Support Payments, whilst the lowest level of agreement, relatively, was to include additional groups within the 'protected category'.

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

Proposals	Yes	No	Don't know
To include additional groups within the 'protected category'	15	8	2
Disregarding the new Bereavement Support Payments	20	1	4
To disregard the 'We Love Manchester Emergency Fund' and 'The London Emergencies Trust'.	16	5	4

2. Background and Methodology

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.

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 Blackpool Council staff 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. The consultation went live on 11 September and closed on 22 October 2017, a period of 6 weeks.

25 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.

Who responded?

Figure 2.1: Respondent demographic information

Question options	Number of responses
Does your household receive Council Tax Reduction?	
Yes	4
No	19
Don't know	0
Are you...?	
Male	9
Female	13
Prefer not to say	2
Which age group do you belong to?	
18 to 24	2
25 to 34	3
35 to 44	5
45 to 54	9
55 to 64	3
Prefer not to say	2
Do you have any children in the following age groups? (MULTIPLE RESPONSE)	
5 to 10	2
11 to 16	4
Over 16	5
Don't have any children	12
Prefer not to say	3
Do you consider yourself to have a disability?	
Yes	8
No	15
What best describes your ethnic background?	
White	21
Asian or Asian British	1
Prefer not to say	1

3. Main Findings

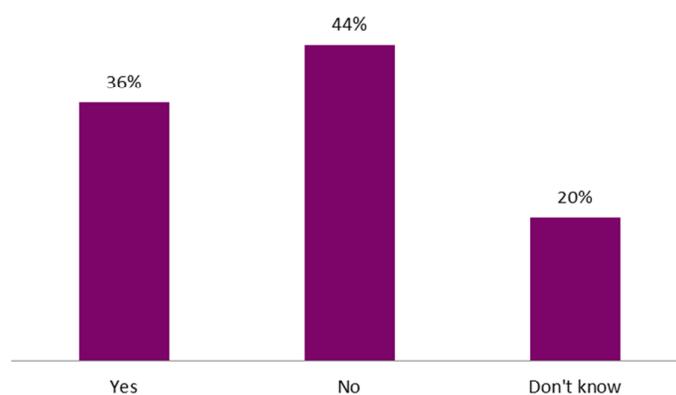
The consultation included a question asking whether the current Council Tax Reduction scheme should be kept and maintained with the same level of support as it currently has and individual questions on three proposals. For both the initial question and for each of the three proposals respondents were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

Three respondents added a comment with two supporting low income families and individuals and one respondent raising a concern about those residents who tried to falsely claim Council Tax reductions.

3.1 Paying for the scheme

9 of the 25 respondents answered yes to the council keeping the current Tax Reduction scheme with 11 respondents answering no and 5 respondents saying that they did not know.

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 - 25)

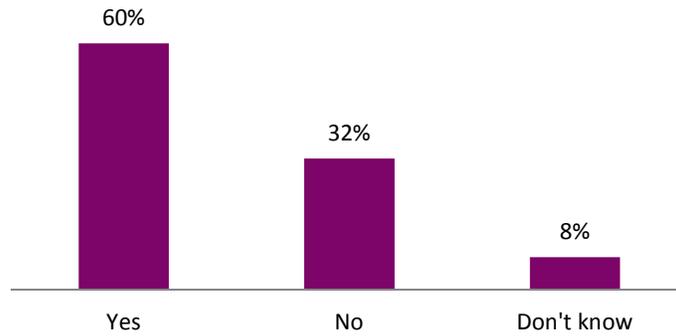


3.2 Proposal 1 – To include additional groups within the ‘protected category’.

15 of the 25 respondents to the survey agreed with the proposal to include additional groups within the ‘protected category’. This proposal would extend the protected group to include applicants or their partners who receive Income Support, Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance and Income-Related Employment Support Allowance.

Five respondents added a comment with one respondent expressing concern at lack of support for low income families whilst three other comments expressed concern around the relationship between receiving benefits and low wages.

Figure 3.2: Do you agree with the proposals to extend the 'protected group' to include applicants or their partners who receive Income Support, Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance, Income-Related Employment Support Allowance? (base - 25)

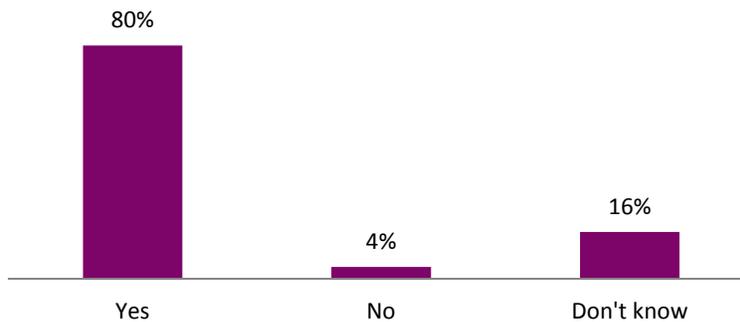


3.3 Proposal 2 – Disregarding the new Bereavement Support Payments

20 of 25 respondents agreed with the proposal to disregard the new Bereavement Support Payments. 1 respondent disagreed with the proposal and 4 respondents chose the 'don't know' response.

Two respondents added comments which were mildly in disagreement with the proposal.

Figure 3.3: Do you agree with the proposals to disregard the new Bereavement Support Payments which will replace Bereavement Payments, Bereavement Allowance and Widowed Parents Allowance? (base – 25)

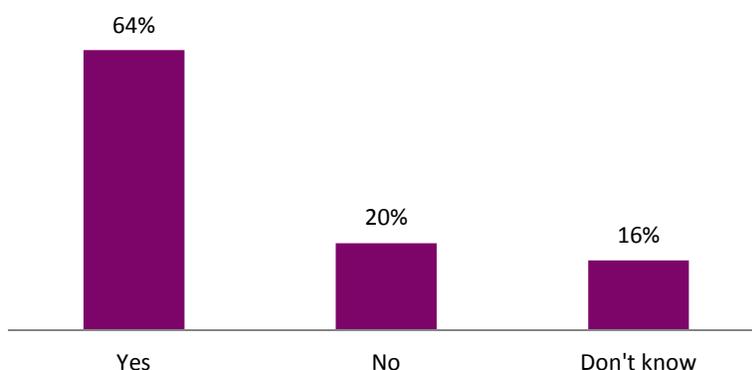


3.4 Proposal 3 – To disregard the ‘We Love Manchester Emergency Fund’ and ‘The London Emergencies Trust’

16 of 25 respondents agreed with the proposal to disregard the We Love Manchester Emergency Fund and The London Emergencies Trust. Five people disagreed with this proposal and four chose the don't know option.

Three respondents added a comment with one comment made in disagreement of the proposal. Another comment questioned the logistics of the proposal whilst the other comment seemed to indicate agreement but their response to Q8 stated ‘no’.

Figure 3.4: Do you agree with the proposal to disregard the ‘We Love Manchester Emergency Fund’ and ‘The London Emergencies Trust’. (base – 25)



3.5 Other suggestions and comments

The highest level of agreement to an alternative option was ‘Not make the changes and use any savings to potentially reduce the Council Tax’ (60% of respondents agreed), whilst the highest level of disagreement was with not making the changes and retaining any savings for future use (83% of respondents disagreed).

Figure 3.5: Alternatives to increasing the amount of help provided by the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Alternatives to increasing the amount of help provided by the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (base – 25)	Yes	No	Don't know
Not make the changes and use any savings for other Council services	39%	48%	13%
Not make the changes and use any savings to potentially reduce the Council Tax	60%	32%	8%

Not make the changes and retain any savings for future use	9%	83%	9%
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In line with figure 3.4 the highest ranked alternative is to potentially reduce Council Tax levels (56%) while the lowest ranked is to retain any savings for future use (4%)

Figure 3.6: Alternatives to increasing the amount of help provided by the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (ranking).

Preference for alternative options (base – 25)	1 st Choice	2 nd Choice	3 rd Choice
Use savings for other Council services	40%	50%	8%
Potentially reduce Council Tax levels	56%	23%	21%
Retain any savings for future use	4%	27%	71%

In response to Q12 two respondents added further comment. One comment suggested that the information provided was incomplete and related their own experience to illustrate the points made and the additional comment advocated help to only the 'less well-off' rather than individual groups identified on the survey.

In response to Q13 three suggestions were made for consideration by respondents including 'ensuring all properties are registered to pay council tax' and 'using the money saved to provide more bins around the town'.

In response to Q14 two respondents added further comment. One respondent questioned why certain groups were being helped in comparison to other groups whilst the other respondent made a comment about the background information provided.