

Council Tax Support and Council Tax Technical Changes Full Consultation Report

Confidentiality Statement

All information in this document is provided in confidence for the sole purpose of adjudication of the document and shall not be used for any other purpose and shall not be published or disclosed wholly or in part to any other party without RMBC's prior permission in writing and shall be held in safe custody. These obligations shall not apply to information, which is published or becomes known legitimately from some source other than RMBC.

Many of the products, services and company names referred to in this document are trademarks or registered trademarks.

They are all hereby acknowledged.

Approvers

Name	Date
Peter Hudson	22 nd June 2012

Distribution

Name	Location
Operational Managers, Revenues & Benefits	Riverside House
Stuart Booth	Riverside House
Peter Hudson	Riverside House
Anne Ellis	Riverside House
SLT	Riverside House

Table of Contents

Council Tax Support and Council Tax Technical Changes	1
Full Consultation Report.....	1
Confidentiality Statement	2
1 Introduction	4
1.1 Objectives and Scope	4
2 Consultation Programme.....	5
2.1 Press	5
2.2 Face to face consultation.....	5
2.3 Promotion of consultation by post and electronic communication.....	5
3 Detailed Consultation Results.....	6
3.1 Making up the shortfall in funding	6
3.1.1 Cuts to the new Council Tax Support scheme	6
3.1.2 Changes to discounts and exemptions.....	7
3.1.3 Meet some of the shortfall from Council funds	7
3.2 Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme.....	8
3.2.1 Maximum Council Tax Support	8
3.2.2 Safeguarding vulnerable groups.....	9
3.2.3 Promoting work incentives.....	10
3.2.4 Armed Forces covenant	11
3.2.5 Abolish Second Adult Rebate.....	12
3.3 Proposed changes to Council Tax Discounts and Exemptions.....	12
3.3.1 Second homes.....	12
3.3.2 Vacant properties undergoing major structural repair	13
3.3.3 Vacant and unfurnished properties (first six months).....	14
3.3.4 Vacant and unfurnished properties (vacant for over six months).....	14
3.3.5 Long term vacant and unfurnished properties (vacant for over two years)	15
4 Summary of consultation results.....	16
5 Additional consultation comments.....	18
6 Equalities data	19
7 Glossary of Terms	21
8 Change History.....	22
Appendix A – Additional Consultation Comments.....	23
Consultation comments	23
Comments through the Councils web site or by e-mail.....	36

1 Introduction

Council Tax Support

From April 2013, The Government is abolishing the current national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme and asking local authorities to set up their own local schemes to meet the needs of their local area.

Our local scheme will be known as Council Tax Support (CTS). In making these changes the Coalition Government is reducing the amount of funding to Rotherham Council to provide Council Tax support.

At present the Government funds 100% of the current Council Tax Benefit scheme. However under the new Council Tax Support scheme Rotherham will receive a set figure as an annual grant. The government will reduce the grant by 10% of the amount paid out in Council Tax benefit from 1st April 2013.

Any spend on Council Tax Support above the grant level will have to be met out of the Councils own funds to the detriment of other Council services.

As a result we will have to make some difficult decisions about who will get financial help to pay their Council Tax and how much help they will receive.

Changes to Council Tax Discount and Exemptions

From 1st April 2013 the government is allowing Councils local discretion on the levels of some Council Tax discount and exemptions. The Council is proposing therefore to make changes to discounts and exemptions in order to raise additional funds to meet some of the losses in government funding for the new Council tax Support scheme.

1.1 Objectives and Scope

As part of the processes of creating the local CTS scheme the council is required to consult with the public on its proposals.

The Public consultation on the proposed CTS scheme and changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions started on 24th September 2012 and ended on 19th November 2012.

This document seeks to analyse the consultation results in order that they can be considered by Members in reaching a final decision on the final CTS scheme and the changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions which will come into effect on 1st April 2013.

2 Consultation Programme

A wide variety of methods were used as part of the Consultation process with the aim of ensuring the approach was inclusive of all groups including those currently in receipt of Council Tax Benefit or Council Tax discounts and exemptions.

Overall there were 177 responses to the consultation of which 42 were currently in receipt of Council tax Benefit and 53 were currently in receipt of Council Tax discount or exemptions. Although the number of responses was low in comparison with the volume of communications that were issued this appears to be in line with a national low response level experienced by the majority of Councils who have consulted. A further breakdown of the respondents based on the equalities data can be found in section 8.

The consultation methods consisted of the following.

2.1 Press

- A public notice was placed in both the Rotherham Advertiser and Dinnington Guardian on 21st September 2012
- A press release in the Rotherham Advertiser on 21st September 2012

2.2 Face to face consultation

- Advice was given with regards to the forthcoming changes at the Rotherham show on 8th September 2012 prior to consultation going live
- Consultation meetings were held with Voluntary Action Rotherham both before the consultation commenced and on 8th November 2012 during the consultation period
- Consultation presentations were made to Housing Associations, Representative groups and Area Assemblies
- Canvassing of public was undertaken in Riverside customer services centre

2.3 Promotion of consultation by post and electronic communication

Promotion of on-line consultation was undertaken by letter, SMS and email together with the inclusion of promotional flyer with benefit notifications and Council Tax bills.

A total of 5,462 letters/flyers, 7,826 emails and 21,197 SMS were sent promoting the consultation process.

3 Detailed Consultation Results

This section details the responses to the three sections of the consultation which asked the respondents opinions on:

- How the authority should make up the shortfall in funding (3.1)
- The proposed design of the CTS scheme (3.2)
- The proposed changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions (3.3)

This section shows the overall results for each question but also breaks down those results further to show responses for the relevant groups. Therefore for questions regarding reductions in benefits the results are split between those claiming benefit and those not. Similarly for questions regarding reductions in Council Tax discounts and exemptions the results are split between recipients and non recipients.

Additionally in respect of some questions there has been further analysis by other criteria where this was considered appropriate. Where this additional analysis has been carried out on data contained in the equalities section it should be remembered that respondents have the option not to answer, consequently results are not based on the full data set.

3.1 Making up the shortfall in funding

As part of the consultation we initially asked respondents to give their opinions on the following three options to make up the shortfall in funding:

3.1.1 Cuts to the new Council Tax Support scheme

People were asked whether Rotherham should reduce benefit expenditure through cuts to the new CTS scheme.

The responses in Table 1 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of CTB and those not.

Table 1

	Benefit Claimants	Non Benefit Claimants	Overall
Strongly Support	9.52%	33.33%	27.68%
Tend to Support	19.05%	37.04%	32.77%
Tend to Oppose	14.29%	8.15%	9.6%
Strongly Oppose	40.48%	11.11%	18.08%
No Opinion	16.66%	10.37%	11.87%

Overall 60% of respondents supported this proposal while 28% opposed.

Only 29% of benefit claimants as a separate group supported the proposal which is understandable in light of the fact that benefit claimants are the people who will be adversely affected financially should this change be implemented.

As pensioners are protected from any cuts to CTS the data has been further analysed to show the split in responses between those of pensionable age and those of working age. Table 2 shows the split in responses between pensionable and work age for all respondents who completed the equalities section of the consultation.

Table 2

	Pensioners	Work Age
Strongly Support	40%	27.08%
Tend to Support	35%	33.33%
Tend to Oppose	0%	9.72%
Strongly Oppose	20%	18.06%
No Opinion	5%	11.81%

This further analysis based on age showed the proposal supported by both Pensioners 75% and work age 60%.

3.1.2 Changes to discounts and exemptions

People were asked whether Rotherham should increase Council Tax income through changes to discounts and exemptions.

The responses in Table 3 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of a Council Tax discount or exemption.

Table 3

	Discount or Exemption Recipients	Non Discount or Exemption Recipients	Overall
Strongly Support	11.32%	27.42%	22.6%
Tend to Support	30.19%	29.84%	29.94%
Tend to Oppose	20.75%	11.29%	14.12%
Strongly Oppose	35.85%	21.77%	25.99%
No Opinion	1.89%	9.68%	7.35%

Overall 53% of respondents supported this proposal while 40% opposed.

Only 42% of current discount or exemption recipients as a separate group supported the proposal which is understandable in light of the fact that benefit claimants are the people who will be adversely affected financially should this change be implemented.

3.1.3 Meet some of the shortfall from Council funds

People were asked whether Rotherham should meet some of the shortfall from council funds including a potential increase in Council Tax levels.

The responses in Table 4 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between currently in receipt of CTB and those not.

Table 4

	Benefit Claimants	Non Benefit Claimants	Overall
Strongly Support	23.81%	25.19%	24.86%
Tend to Support	40.48%	29.63%	32.2%
Tend to Oppose	7.14%	22.22%	18.64%
Strongly Oppose	14.29%	15.56%	15.25%
No Opinion	14.28%	7.4%	9.05%

Overall 57% of respondents supported this proposal and this pattern held true both for the individual groups of benefit claimants 64% and non-benefit claimants 55%

3.2 Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme

The Council produced a draft Council Tax Support scheme based largely upon the existing Council Tax Benefit rules which was available to respondents as part of the consultation process.

3.2.1 Maximum Council Tax Support

The main proposed change to the current Council Tax Benefit scheme was to introduce a maximum Council Tax Support level. This would be set at a percentage of the Council Tax entitlement which is sufficient to meet the likely shortfall in government funding.

At present a claimant may be entitled to Council Tax Benefit to meet 100% of their Council Tax bill. However it was proposed that the maximum entitlement for Council Tax Support will be reduced to a percentage yet to be decided. This will mean all working age CTS claimants will have to make some payment towards their Council Tax.

The maximum percentage entitlement is dependant on decisions made regarding funding the shortfall through other changes to the scheme, additional income raised from changes to Council Tax and subsidy from Council funds and will be made at a later date.

People were asked whether they agreed that all claimants of a working age should pay a minimum percentage of their Council Tax bill themselves.

The responses in Table 5 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of CTB and those not.

Table 5

	Benefit Claimants	Non Benefit Claimants	Overall
Strongly Agree	26.19%	58.52%	50.85%
Tend to Agree	30.95%	22.22%	24.29%
Tend to Disagree	14.29%	5.93%	7.91%
Strongly Disagree	26.19%	11.11%	14.69%
No Opinion	2.38%	2.22%	2.26%

Overall 75% of respondents agreed this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for the individual groups of benefit claimants 57% and non-benefit claimants 81%

3.2.2 Safeguarding vulnerable groups

When designing a scheme the Council must also have regard to:

- Equalities Act 2010

The Council must have regard to disabilities when making decisions of a strategic nature in order to reduce any inequalities. There is a duty on the Local Authority to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.

- Child Poverty Act 2010

Part 2 of the Child Poverty Act 2010, sections 19-25, place a duty on Local Authorities to reduce child poverty in their area.

- Guidance issued by the Secretary of State to safeguard vulnerable groups.

The rules for Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) means-tested benefits have a scheme of allowances and premiums that take into account the make-up of the claimant's household, including responsibility for children, caring responsibilities and varying degrees of ill health and disability. Additionally some types of income related to children (Child benefit and child maintenance) or income related to disability (Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance) are not counted in assessing a claimant's income for Council Tax Benefit.

The Council proposes that it retains the present scheme of allowances, premiums and income disregards in the Council Tax Support scheme as the best way of recognising the particular needs of families, carers and people with disabilities.

People were asked whether they agreed with the Councils proposal to retain the present scheme of allowances, premiums and income disregards as the best way of recognising the particular needs of families, carers and people with disabilities.

The responses in Table 6 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of CTB and those not.

Table 6

	Benefit Claimants	Non Benefit Claimants	Overall
Strongly Agree	61.9%	25.93%	34.46%
Tend to Agree	14.29%	45.93%	38.42%
Tend to Disagree	9.52%	11.85%	11.3%
Strongly Disagree	9.52%	8.89%	9.04%
No Opinion	4.77%	7.4%	6.78%

Overall 73% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both for the individual groups of benefit claimants 76% and non-benefit claimants 72%

Table 7 below shows further analysis of the responses from those indicating they were a carer or disabled, two of the groups we were seeking to safeguard. A total of 23 respondents identified themselves as a carer and 39 as disabled.

Table 7

	Carer	Disabled
Strongly Agree	43.48%	36.11%
Tend to Agree	26.09%	33.33%
Tend to Disagree	13.04%	16.67%
Strongly Disagree	13.04%	11.11%
No Opinion	4.35%	2.78%

For both groups we saw majority agreement of 70% for carers and 69% for the disabled.

3.2.3 Promoting work incentives

When designing a scheme the Council must also have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State to promote work incentives.

With this in mind the Council proposes to maintain the current 4 week run on period in order to incentivise work. This means that a claimant entering work or increasing their hours will, as at present, not see their Council Tax Support entitlement reduce for a period of 4 weeks.

Additionally the proposal is that the 20% taper will be retained meaning employed claimants will lose only 20p benefit for every additional £1 they earn.

People were asked if they agreed with the Councils proposal to retain the 4 week run on period in order to incentivise work

The responses in Table 8 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of CTB and those not.

Table 8

	Benefit Claimants	Non Benefit Claimants	Overall
Strongly Agree	57.14%	31.85%	37.85%
Tend to Agree	26.19%	35.56%	33.33%
Tend to Disagree	4.76%	10.37%	9.04%
Strongly Disagree	4.76%	11.85%	10.17%
No Opinion	7.15%	10.37%	9.61%

Overall 71% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both individual groups of benefit claimants 83% and non-benefit claimants 67%

3.2.4 Armed Forces covenant

When designing a scheme the Council must also have regard to have regard to the Armed Forces Covenant.

With the covenant in mind the Council proposes to retain the existing disregard of 100% of all monies received in respect of war widows and war disablement pensions.

People were asked if they agreed with the Councils proposals to continue to disregard all monies received in respect of war widows and war disablement pensions.

The responses in Table 9 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of CTB and those not.

Table 9

	Benefit Claimants	Non Benefit Claimants	Overall
Strongly Agree	47.62%	54.81%	53.11%
Tend to Agree	23.81%	20.74%	21.47%
Tend to Disagree	9.52%	8.15%	8.47%
Strongly Disagree	9.52%	9.63%	9.6%
No Opinion	9.53%	6.67%	7.35%

Overall 75% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both individual groups of benefit claimants 71% and non-benefit claimants 76%

3.2.5 Abolish Second Adult Rebate

Currently, claimants whose income and capital is too high to for them to be entitled to Council Tax Benefit, but who have other adult(s) in the household with low income, can receive a Second Adult Rebate of up to 25%. This is designed to compensate people who would normally qualify for a single person discount if a second adult did not live with them regardless of how much income they receive.

The Council proposes to abolish the current second adult rebate scheme for single working age claimants which would affect 232 claimants and save £51,000.

People were asked if they agreed that the Council should not offer Second adult rebate

The responses in Table 10 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of CTB and those not.

Table 10

	Benefit Claimants	Non Benefit Claimants	Overall
Strongly Agree	30.95%	46.67%	42.94%
Tend to Agree	40.48%	28.89%	31.64%
Tend to Disagree	11.9%	8.15%	9.04%
Strongly Disagree	14.29%	10.37%	11.3%
No Opinion	2.38%	5.93%	5.08%

Overall 75% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both individual groups of benefit claimants 71% and non-benefit claimants 76%

3.3 Proposed changes to Council Tax Discounts and Exemptions

From 1st April 2013 the government is allowing Councils local discretion on the levels of some Council Tax discount and exemptions. Although there was no legal requirement to consult on these changes it was felt that it was appropriate to do so alongside the CTS consultation.

The Council proposes to make the following changes in order to raise additional funds to meet some of the losses in government funding for the new Council tax Support scheme and people were asked their opinions of the proposals.

3.3.1 Second homes

At present the authority grants 50% discount on second homes but proposes to remove this discount making Council Tax payable in full for such properties.

People were asked whether they agreed the Council should remove the 50% discount currently granted to second homes.

The responses in Table 11 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of a Council Tax discount or exemption.

Table 11

	Discount or Exemption Recipients	Non Discount or Exemption Recipients	Overall
Strongly Support	60.38%	64.52%	63.28%
Tend to Support	18.87%	13.71%	15.25%
Tend to Oppose	7.55%	2.42%	3.95%
Strongly Oppose	9.43%	14.52%	12.99%
No Opinion	3.77%	4.83%	4.53%

Overall 79% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both individual groups of discount or exemption recipients 79% and non-recipients 78%

3.3.2 Vacant properties undergoing major structural repair

At present these properties are exempt from Council Charge for the first 12 months. The Council proposes to replace this exemption with a 25% discount.

People were asked whether they agreed the Council should reduce the 12 month 100% discount for homes undergoing structural repair to 25%.

The responses in Table 12 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of a Council Tax discount or exemption.

Table 12

	Discount or Exemption Recipients	Non Discount or Exemption Recipients	Overall
Strongly Support	28.3%	39.52%	36.16%
Tend to Support	22.64%	27.42%	25.99%
Tend to Oppose	28.3%	16.13%	19.77%
Strongly Oppose	15.09%	12.9%	13.56%
No Opinion	5.67%	4.03%	4.52%

Overall 62% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both individual groups of discount or exemption recipients 51% and non-recipients 67%

3.3.3 Vacant and unfurnished properties (first six months)

At present these properties are exempt from Council Tax. The Council proposes to replace this exemption with a 25% discount.

People were asked whether they agreed the Council should reduce the 6 month 100% discount for vacant and unfurnished homes to 25%.

The responses in Table 13 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of a Council Tax discount or exemption.

Table 13

	Discount or Exemption Recipients	Non Discount or Exemption Recipients	Overall
Strongly Support	35.85%	41.94%	40.11%
Tend to Support	24.53%	25.81%	25.42%
Tend to Oppose	18.87%	9.68%	12.43%
Strongly Oppose	18.87%	19.35%	19.21%
No Opinion	1.88%	3.22%	2.83%

Overall 66% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both individual groups of discount or exemption recipients 60% and non-recipients 68%

3.3.4 Vacant and unfurnished properties (vacant for over six months)

At present these properties receive a discretionary 50%. The Council proposes to remove this discount making Council Tax payable in full for such properties.

People were asked whether they agreed the Council should remove the current 50% discount for homes vacant and unfurnished after 6 months.

The responses in Table 14 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of a Council Tax discount or exemption.

Table 14

	Discount or Exemption Recipients	Non Discount or Exemption Recipients	Overall
Strongly Support	41.51%	50.81%	48.02%
Tend to Support	26.42%	22.58%	23.73%
Tend to Oppose	13.21%	10.48%	11.3%
Strongly Oppose	16.98%	12.1%	13.56%
No Opinion	1.88%	4.03%	3.39%

Overall 72% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both individual groups of discount or exemption recipients 68% and non-recipients 73%

3.3.5 Long term vacant and unfurnished properties (vacant for over two years)

At present these properties receive a discretionary 50% Council Tax discount regardless of how long they are empty. The Council proposes to introduce a premium 150% charge. This is intended to encourage owners of long term empty properties to bring them back into use.

People were asked whether they agreed the Council should charge a 50% premium on properties vacant and unfurnished for a period of over 2 years.

The responses in Table 15 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of a Council Tax discount or exemption.

Table 15

	Discount or Exemption Recipients	Non Discount or Exemption Recipients	Overall
Strongly Support	50.94%	52.42%	51.98%
Tend to Support	26.42%	22.58%	23.73%
Tend to Oppose	1.89%	8.06%	6.21%
Strongly Oppose	13.21%	11.29%	11.86%
No Opinion	7.54%	5.65%	6.22%

Overall 76% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both individual groups of discount or exemption recipients 77% and non-recipients 75%

4 Summary of consultation results

The analysis shows that overall a majority the 177 respondents supported all of the proposals. Within the overall support for the Council's proposed CTS scheme it was possible to identify some specific trends:

- Although benefit claimants as a separate group opposed the principle of a benefit cut, a majority of them agreed with all the proposals within the CTS scheme which would bring about that cut, including a maximum benefit entitlement which had yet to be set.
- Similarly, although discount and exemption recipients opposed the principle of cuts that would affect them, a majority of this group agreed with all the proposals for the individual changes to reduce specific discounts and exemptions

The findings of the consultation are broken down to the three main areas of questioning below.

It should be noted that for the purposes of the summary “strongly” and “tend to” responses have been combined for both those supporting and those opposing proposals. Percentages of respondents stating “no opinion” are not listed in the summary.

Making up the shortfall in funding

Overall the majority of respondents supported all three options:

- **Cuts to Council Tax Support to reduce expenditure**

Overall 60% of respondents supported this proposal while 28% opposed.

The results for this proposal varied greatly between current benefit claimants (29% supported and 55% opposed) and non-benefit claimants (70% supported and 19% opposed). This is understandable in light of the fact that benefit claimants are the people who will be adversely affected financially should this change be implemented.

- **Changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions to increase income**

Overall 53% of respondents supported this proposal while 40% opposed.

The results for this proposal varied greatly between current recipients of discounts and exemptions (42% supported and 57% opposed) and non-recipients (57% supported and 33% opposed). Again this is understandable in light of the fact that current recipients are the people who will be adversely affected financially should these changes be implemented..

- **Meeting some of the shortfall from Council funds**

Overall 57% of respondents supported this proposal while 34% opposed. Additionally 64% of benefit claimants and 55% of non claimants also supported this proposal.

Proposed Council Tax Support scheme

The overall majority of respondents supported all proposals for the new scheme – and this pattern held true both for the individual groups of benefit claimants and non-benefit claimants. The table below summarises respondent support levels in total and for both groups.

Scheme Proposal for	Benefit Claimants	Non- Benefit Claimants	Overall
Maximum % benefit entitlement	57%	81%	75%
Safeguarding vulnerable groups	76%	72%	73%
Promoting work incentives	83%	67%	71%
Armed forces covenant	71%	76%	75%
Abolishing second adult rebate	71%	76%	75%

Additionally, analysis of the proposed measures to safeguard vulnerable people saw 70% of carers and 69% of disabled responders agreeing with the proposals.

Proposed changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions

Again all proposals for specific changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions received agreement from the majority respondents overall, as well from current recipients and non-recipients groups. The table below shows the percentages in agreement for the respondents overall and the two groups.

Scheme Proposal for	Discount Recipients	Non- Discount Recipients	Overall
Remove second home discount	79%	78%	79%
Reduce vacant undergoing structural repair to 25% discount	51%	67%	62%
Reduce vacant first six months 25% discount	60%	68%	66%
Remove vacant over 6 months discount	68%	73%	72%
50% premium for properties empty over 2 years	77%	75%	76%

5 Additional consultation comments

We received additional free text comments through:

- the consultation itself which allowed respondents to make additional comments at each stage
- the councils web site general comment box or through email to the authority

All additional comments through both sources are listed in full in Appendix A.

6 Equalities data

The following data details the equalities information provided by respondents to the consultation. The numbers and rounded percentages are only for those who completed this section as some opted not to.

Gender (166)

Female	56% (93)
Male	44% (73)

Age (166)

16 to 24	3% (5)
25 to 34	20% (33)
35 to 44	23% (38)
45 to 54	25% (42)
55 to 64	16% (26)
65 to 74	11% (19)
75 to 84	1% (1)
85 and over	1% (2)

Disabled (162)

No	76% (123)
Yes	24% (39)

The breakdown of the disabilities were as follows:

(15) Long-standing illness or health condition (such as Stroke, cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy)

(11) Physical or mobility impairment (such as difficulty using your arms or mobility issues which means using a wheelchair or crutches)

(9) Mental health condition (such as dementia, depression or schizophrenia)

(2) Sensory impairment (Such as being blind / having a serious visual impairment or being deaf / having a serious hearing impairment)

(2) Learning disability/difficulty (such as Down's syndrome or dyslexia) or cognitive impairment (such as autistic spectrum disorder)

Carer (160)

No	86% (137)
Yes	14% (23)

Ethnic Origin (167)

White British	91% (152)
White Irish	1% (1)
Other White background	2% (4)
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1% (1)

Black or Black British – African	1% (1)
Asian and white	1% (1)
Other Multiple Heritage	1% (1)
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1% (1)
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1% (2)
Asian or Asian British – Kashmiri	2% (3)

Other ethnic groups were available as options such as Chinese, Yemeni etc however were not selected by respondents

Religion / Belief (141)

Christianity	63% (89)
Islam	5% (7)
None	26% (37)
Other	6% (8)

Other religions Buddhism, Hinduism, Humanism, Sikhism were available as options however were not selected by respondents

Sexual Orientation / Sexuality (141)

Heterosexual	95% (134)
Bisexual	1% (1)
Lesbian / Gay	4% (6)

7 Glossary of Terms

Abbreviation	Explanation
CTB	Council Tax Benefit – National scheme to cease on 31/3/2013
CTS	Council Tax Support – Localised scheme to commence on 1/4/2013
RMBC	Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

8 Change History

Issue	Owner	Date	Change Details
1, 1 st Draft	R.Cutts	19/11/12	Initial Draft
1	R.Cutts	22/11/12	Issue 1

Appendix A – Additional Consultation Comments

Consultation comments

The following are the comments in full which were included in consultation responses together with the question on the consultation.

In all these cases those posting comments have also completed the consultation itself and their views on proposals will be included in the results.

Maximum Council Tax Support

If you have any further comments to make on the proposals that all working age claimants will have some Council Tax to pay, could you please specify?

I am claiming council tax benefit and I think that my working children should pay a part of my council tax. The house is not in their name so this should not be their debt.

No representation without direct taxation. There are too many who contribute little or nothing are are happy to support spending of the money handed over by the few. Everyone needs to be reminded there is no free lunch any more.

This would be too subjective. Where will the poverty line start?

YEAH AND WHY SHOULD PEOPLE WHO GET MOBILY/DLA AND OTHER BENEFITS EVEN IF THEY HAVE A PERSON LIVING THERE AND WORKING FULL TIME WITH WAGES OVER £1000 DO NOT HAVE TO PAY RENT OR COUNCIL TAX THIS IS WRONG AND NEEDS TO BE CHANGED.

All claimants should make some contribution to Council Tax.....why should it fall on pensioners and tax payers to foot the bill all the time.

I think the house and street needs to be assessed for tax, such as Doe Quarry Lane has old small dated houses, so this road should be made less compared to somewhere like Woodsetts which is a better area and well deserved people should live there but with the tax a bit higher then Doe Quarry Lane. As streets and houses are different, this may even help parish councils have a voice.

If these people dont pay then I effectively have to pay twice, once directly and the second through my higher taxes.

If those in this catagory can afford to smoke and drink, or run a car, they can afford to pay their fair share of taxes.

Council Tax contribution should relate to income. There are benefit claimants who have a higher income than some of those working.

anyone using any council a service (housing etc) should have to pay towards the service and think your payments of £200 more than fair.

This would be ok if the working age claimants was above a certain Pay Bracket as people on low income would suffer .

This is a proposal to get the poll tax back in through the back door

I hope that this does not mean an increase to single persons council tax. I live alone and am currently paying £60 per month on a one bedroom flat! I will refuse to pay if that increases! I agree that benefit scroungers should have to pull their finger out and make a contribution. I work hard to pay for the layabouts.

I think it is fair to ask working age claimants to contribute a minimum amount and based on number of people in the household. £ 3.85 per week is less than the cost of a packet of cigarettes so not unreasonable.

A person who is at working age should not pay any council tax if they are currently not in work. When a person is in this position money is extremely tight now. The thought of having to pay some money out towards this is fearful. When will the poor get help, instead of having their money cut cut and cut again.????

Please don't punish households that pay the maximum council tax by raising standard council tax bands. It shouldn't be those who work hard and already pay that have to make up the shortfall.

I agree that everyone should contribute towards their council tax

I personally think council tax should always be based on 2 adults at a address and a bigger discount than is currently offered should be in place for just 1 adult.

It may be that a person is of working age, however what if that person cannot work for some reason, or is on a very low income or a fixed income - it is scandalous that a labour council should consider this benefit cut. Perhaps the council should focus it's energy on fighting the central government cuts instead of welcoming them. Or even better - make cuts elsewhere in the Authority - there is plenty of 'FAT' to go at....

If they are of working age they should be able to get work

As long as consideration is given to other changes to benefits then a minimum charge would be favourable to demonstrate that everyone contributes in some way.

I HAVE WORKED 16 YEARS SINCE I LEFT SCHOOL AND IN 2009 I HAD A BREAKDOWN AND DIDNT PAY MY BILLS. BAILLIFFS ARRIVED AT MY HOUSES. WHAT ABOUT THESE PEOPLE THAT HAVE NEVER WORKED AND NEVER PAID. ITS DISCUSTING

If they are on benefits already and especially single they won't have enough money to pay the rest of their bills or eat properly sending them further into poverty.

People suffering from long term ill health

This is fairer than by property. Currently i pay as much for a tiny one bedroom flat than people in 3 bedroom semis with large gardens with 3 adults living in it.

While I dont object to people paying a small amount of the council tax bill themselves, I feel that you need to look at the individuals circumstances as to what the minimum payment should be.

everyone who can pay should pay

Many people expect to pay a certain amount, and are surprised when told they have nothing to pay

The minimum amount should be increased if the claimant is showing no signs of looking for a job, or benefits reduced to account for this.

I would support everyone eligible should contribute something towards the council tax,

including those on benefits. Everyone benefits from what the council tax supports - schools, fire, police etc, so I would support everyone contributing even if this is a small percentage

I am inclined to think that if an individual is receiving JSA, that taking any more money from the small amount they receive could result in further unrest amongst them.

the council should be chasing the people unfairly dodging council tax instead of punishing the working people who are easy targets to keep putting my/their bills up

I know that a lot of elderly people could more than afford to pay at least something towards council tax.

There should be a some sort of back up system for people as I think circumstances are all different for different households and each case could be looked at individually if problems paying arise. Under 25's seem to be particularly hard hit at the moment. They may be working but frequently they are on low wages and at least they are working.

The proposals will be unfair and inefficient.

Single people in 3 bed houses who do not work, due to them getting rent/ council tax paid should pay may give them incentive to get off their backs and get a job. people with children are a different matter, except those that have children so they dont have to work, and keep having kids and dont name the father, and laughing at such as me that has always worked. I know a few that need to get sorted. 2 that live near me in 3 bed houses and dont work and they complaining about the empty bed proposal, so i said why should I pay and they get help for their empty rooms, also a family could live in their houses, they should be re-housed in flats. thats my opinion I think the council should check up on their tenants in 3 bed and get these people sorted asap.

The council should look at its own expenses which should be cut.

Government should make up the shortfall

All under 25s should not be eligible to claim council tax unless on presentation of extenuating circumstances.

cut how much is payed to the top managers who don't do a lot of work and stop making up a lot of jobs that are not needed

yes, although there should be exemptions for people with disabilities etc

single people with no other benefit than income support cannot afford another tax. It would not be paid in many cases and enforcement would be costly and in humane.

The unemployed single people will find this proposal very hard

This is less than a packet of cigarettes a week so should be able to affordablke, many low income families smoke and find the money. There should however be a claus for those who truely cannot afford this.

Residents living on JSA only recive £71 per week if over 25 and single. The cost of keeping a home on this amount of money is extrmely difficult. During winter it costs approximately £12 per week for Gas and £12 per week for electricity. Water rates are approx £8 per week. this equates to £32. This leaves £39 to live on per week which would be reduced further if residents had to contribute to council tax. For those under 25, the JSA income is reduced further so would have even less income each week

providing that said claimants are in work

It is grossly unfair that in a time of austerity there are still some that refuse to pay their way. We as a society cannot continue to expect those who work hard and believe in a meritocracy to fund those who are happy to have their entire life funded by handouts. Perhaps introducing people to the reality of the world may prove beneficial to the long term health of society. In saying this I also believe an accommodation must be made for those of pensionable age and those with a disability or severe medical condition as this is the area where the welfare state should be focused and real benefits to people's lives achieved.

Yes the system is fraught with problems and re-calculations on a monthly basis that need sorting out and this should cut costs if masses of paperwork with weekly amounts are taken out of the system.

Every one should contribute if everyone matters

providing they are working

Everyone should pay their council tax and any concession should come from central government benefit

The only drawback I see to this is that some people who have originally had a 100% exemption and then being asked to pay something will be opposed to this and simply not pay their bill. This could cost the Council in debt collection.

5 - 10% of tax bill should also include contributions from unemployed of working age living in property.

Many claimants struggle to live on income below the applicable amount. I, for example struggle to live on £30 per week and have to rely on savings to pay larger bills. Any reduction in council tax benefit would therefore prove catastrophic as I am living below the poverty line.

As a working family on a low wage but paying full council tax I feel those who cannot be bothered to should like anyone else maybe this will encourage people to work or cut down on fags, booze & drugs. As long as tax payers do not have to foot this bill I strongly agree.

Safeguarding vulnerable groups

How else do you think the Council could recognise the needs of households with children, disabled people and people with caring responsibilities while managing the reductions in funding for Council Tax support?

by reducing the income of top executives

Vigorously investigate false claims and reclaim all incorrectly given overpayments.

any recognition of the extra burdens carried by these people should be accommodated in any scheme proposed. They have many extra financial burdens caused by disability.

WHY SHOULD JUST BECAUSE A MOTHER AS A LIMP AND AS MANAGED TO GET MOBILY AND DLA BUT AS A SON LIVING WITH HER THAT WORKS FULL TIME SO CAN NOT BE DOING MUCH CARING AND GETTING OVER £1000 POUNDS A MONTH WHY SOME ONE WHO WORKS AND IS ON LESS MONEY HAVE TO PAY FULL RENT AND COUNCIL TAX THIS IS WRONG THEY SHOULD BE MADE TO PAY SOMETHING.

Stop throwing money down the drain on non essential committees, paperwork and translation services.

I feel this is going to cost more to complete these tasks in the long run. But I think it's simple put the Council Tax up and people on Benefits pay so much towards the Council Tax and the government pay the rest.

It is peoples choice to have additional children and why should they get more benefit because they choose to have more children when on average studies show that when people have more than 3 children, the childrens IQ drops so are less useful to society.

'Families' i.e. young women who deliberately get themselves pregnant with no support from the male sperm donor, so as to obtain a benifits lifestyle and accomodation should recieve NOTHING

Again, benefit claimants' incomes should be taken into account. Checks be made to ensure co-habiting adults are all accounted for - sometimes benefits claimants do not always honestly given the names of all residents.

anyone with who is disabled or as a mental illness should have a discount according to their needs as i am sure they do. anyone with children could be allowed a discount for the first two children and any maintenance payments should be taken into account.

People on benefits are struggling at the moment as the cost of living has gone up , but Benefits have not changed Schools are introducing new uniform etc ... So income is stretched. I personally have gone with out a meal so my family can eat.

ALL household income should be taken into account - money is still money no matter where it comes from, and it is doubtful that child related income is actually spent purely on the child that it is intended for. Child Benefit and Child Maintenance/Support

By looking nationally and regionally to see what other concils are doing to protect the most vunerable in our society

The Council should take into account especially working families with children who are on a low income. Maybe a 'comfortable' threshold of income would reduce the amount. Strongly agree with discounts for legitimate disability and their carers.

People with disabilitys are no different to people without and i have no idea why they would be entitled to any bigger discount.

If they get disability allowance a percentage of that shoul go towards council tax

GO AND ACTUALLY LOOK

The disabled should be left alone most of their benefits have been halved and in some cases stopped since the conservatives came into government.

With households with children that receive family allowance and child tax benefit, there is no need to add on extra money for their needs, as this is taken care of by family allowance and child tax benefit.

Apply the tax on each adult, regardless of where they live, then give benefit according to income e.g. workers pay, people on benefit pay a proportion

Propoer monitoring need to take place to ensure that they system is not abused. At present this is not strong enough

Individual assessments

Child Maintenance payments should be included as an income

need to reflect rising cost of living e.g. utilities

Give vouchers specifically to be used for clothing and food for the children, instead of just money. Make more efforts encouraging people to work, if they can, and penalise when they don't want to.

Carers save local government, millions of pounds every year, to take away any support financially could impact on carers. I support that the council should keep the scheme that supports carers

Should the carer be a family member and they live under the same roof, then I believe that a small reduction should be met.

Individual assessment for long term conditions that are not severe enough for DLA payments, but do prevent the individual from securing employment.

the council need to look more into the financial situation of some claimants as they would be if they were to not be working

It should be based on income by all who live at the property regardless of why they do

I think the discount should be on a sliding scale dependant on how disabled the person living there is. I know families that have children receiving DLA because the child has been diagnosed with social behaviour disorder. I do not think that the same help should be given to that household as for instance another household that has a child who is in a wheelchair and impaired mobility (obviously the second example would need more help).

Child benefit is a regular and substantial income and should be included in calculations of household income.

make sure that the claimants are genuine, not can't be bothered to check them out and take the form at face value.

Forget people with genuine needs, look into the scroungers who are on their own in 3 beds and don't think they should get off their backsides and get a job when they are fitter than me, I work and they just laugh and why should I when I get everything paid.

just take an honest look...

government should make up shortfall

Those caring for the disabled should be given full support, whereas those with able bodied children should be paid a capped minimum amount and encouraged to top it up by working.

Means testing including all benefits

By making sure claimants really are disabled.

People on benefits with children should pay more council tax than a single person with no children. Proportionately more per child as they use council tax services more.

I strongly agree with disabilities and carers and only tend to agree with children. Although not the child's fault it is still a fact that some people will get themselves pregnant for extra income or a bigger house. I have seen this in practice myself and it is a depressing manipulation of a system designed to support those who need it.

From other funding resources available at this time and from central government funding.

It is very hard to be a carer, we receive very little money and are on call 24/7. I get no housing

benefit, so have to pay rent out of my son's DLA, we have very little left to live on. Maybe the local councils should run a lottery. This seems to work in other felds & could be another way of raising money. (My son is 40 years old).

help them more people who's got kids and findingthem homes to live in instead of taking housing benefits and council tax benefit off them

My husbands sister has 4 children, 1st partner killed himself + 3 others in a car accident while high on drugs Now with brother she has never worked or payed c/tax. her life is much less of a struggle than mine + when benefits & discounts added up she has more money than me & my husband who have to work. Yes make them pay like the rest of us have to.

Promoting work incentives

Do you have any further comments to make regarding Councils proposal to promote work?

1) Cut benifits for single people of working age who have are on long term benifits.2) Take the issue of disorder seriously and stop benifits of those families who cause disturbances in communities.

4 weeks reduced benefits is no incentive whatsoever to long term unemployed people to look for work

almost everyone could make some payment to running costs of running the council and i think it is more than fair to increase their payments on a level with their earnings or benefits.

Council Tax Support entitlement should be reduced as soon a soon as possible.

Discriminates against those already working

Find and advertise local jobs

giving people a set time while starting work is a good idea and gives insentive to people looking for work

great as i gives more incentive to get out into work and be productive

I agree with this as it will give people a chance to sort out their finances once thry have returned to work. Consideration should also be given for fluctuating working hours.

I dont know enough about this scheme to comment.

I strongly agree with this as it helps people get on their feet before they see their own income being increased through getting in to work. As getting into work/increasing your hours can sometimes see day to day living costs increasing ie:- bus fares/ext

I think the council should look at other expenditure in the budget before looking to cut benefits which help people in work.

I think this payment could be spread out over a year, but once someone is earning, they should pay same as everyone else working

I think this should be extended to 8 weeks as mostly people who find work have to work a month in hand and starting work can be an expensive time i.e travel expenses etc.

in some cases it may need to be longer, look at it on a 1 to 1

Incentives should still be from central government

It will make no difference to people who want to work that they get 4 weeks extra council tax paid. I know I used to work in housing benefit, just defer the first council tax payment for 8 weeks in order for them to get paid.

Low earners sometimes lose out and this will given help in the interim.

Maybe extend this slightly, giving more time to let the person find their feet.

Offer training programmes within the council section plus building and works section.

Reduce benefits, if people are not making the effort to find a job.

Retaining the 4 week run on period seems fair, I totally agree with the current system.

Suggest increasind it to 12 weeks

The 4 week run on does not necessarily promote work. Charge from the date of change in line with current regs before the run on is applied, but allow an additional payment period at the end of the council tax year so that payments could be made over a total of 13 months. This would still allow claimants an additional month to make payments, but would mean that the council gets an extra 4 weeks money into the coffers from each return to work claim.

The 4 weeks run on gives the claimant time to organise themselves, as quite often they will not get a wage until 1 month after starting work

This needs to be encouraged.

Unfortunately I am not in a position to fully understand what this entails.

Yes, anything that encourages people back into work without making their lifes more difficult should stay. 4 weeks seems fair but a gradual reduction over a longer period may be more helpful to help take into account probationary periods in a new job and give the clamant time to make the neccesaary adjustment

yes,cut benefits more to the work shy of Rotherham,and make them take any jobs that are going.All you see when you walk round town are gangs of yobs smoking and drinking who are obviously not short of money.

You cannot expect someone who has just started work to be able to pay immediately, also if they are paid on a monthly basis they will not have the income in the first month to pay.

You have been changing details on a weekly basis with us so why are you saying your going to do this on a four weekly basis when you are clearly not doing this at this time.

Armed Forces covenant

Do you have any further comments to make regarding Councils proposal to continue disregarding all monies received in respect of war widows and war disablement pensions?

Apart from the pensions of people above the state retirement age, after that the income should be counted.

Especially with regard to disability/death from service.

I believe it speaks for itself.

I don't agree that they should be treated differently to anyone who may have lost a spouse or a spouse who is ill/injured and no longer able to work. Anyone entering the armed forces are

fully aware of the consequences and there are other job opportunities.

It is a noble proposal.

Lobby government to provide adequate pensions to live a full life including paying taxes. Old age pensioners have to pay tax.

Money is money from whatever source. We can no longer afford these disregards of income. Support should be calculated on TOTAL income from all sources.

Only those who really need it should be given the extra support.

The armed forces pay a high price for the job they do and more than "earn" any benefits and should be allowed to keep them untouched.

The Council should keep their hands off all war widows and all war disablement pensions the families of war have enough to worry about after serving this overflowing country without having to worry about pensions and disability allowances

They deserve it. People who have served in this country need some support. People who can't be bothered to work and claim benefit should still have to pay.

they have done their bit and should not be penalised

They have provided for the country, this deserves recognition

They thought for our country we should respect them.

This is income. Should be classed as if they work.

Those who are injured, disabled and bereaved as a result of service should be given exemption and continue to be supported fully regardless of the extra income from other sources. They sacrificed for the country, therefore they deserve some form of recognition

We cannot ask these people to pay, they have served everyone to their best and to ask for them to suffer with a reduced income would be a disgrace

Yes leave the vulnerable alone.

Abolish Second Adult Rebate

Do you have any further comments to make on the proposals regarding second adult rebate?

A determination needs to be made as to whether that individual contributes towards the household, if they either do or can but aren't then they should not be able to claim a rebate. Again, it should be income based.

Again, total income for the household should be considered.

Both incomes should be taken into account and totalled as 1 income and council tax based on the total income.

Charge all adults the same regardless of what they earn. Only if they are not working should they get a benefit whether this is sickness, disability, pension or unemployment.

Could this be means tested in future?

Council tax is based on a property being occupied by two adults. One person occupancy receives a 25% discount. Surely it would be equitable, when a property is occupied by more than two adults, that those additional occupiers should be required to pay a council tax surcharge of, say 25% each. At present there must be a the full benefits of council services without paying anything towards the cost.

Did not know such rebate existed. My housemate is low income but I don't get a rebate. Scrap it

I agree in principle, particularly if they co-habit voluntarily.

I didn't realise this existed! Totally misconceived. Whilst it only costs £51,000 it should be scrapped immediately.

I disagree that the council charge a portion of wages from my adult children.

I don't receive Second adult rebate. Also after being alone parent I think it's about time I had time on my own and be able to live my life. Unfortunately I'm still waiting.

I feel that the total income of the household should be taken into consideration in properties with more than one occupant.

I think the single person should be increased

i would think most people claiming second adult rebate are most likely family or close friends

If the 2nd Adult is a lodger it would be ok. If it is a partner or a young adult who is your daughter or son then they have to be helped in this working.

income should be taken into account.

income should be taken into consideration.

It is not costing the council £51,000 they are not paying this out. They are just not getting £51,000

It should be scrapped as it's costing and adding extra burden to the council budget.

IVE NEVER HAD A REBATE AND STRUGGLE - IN HARSHIP STARVING

Look at people's incomes first, if they earn more than £20,000 then they have to start paying but depending on a band they fall into.

Many people do not know the scheme exists anyway

my mum who is a disabled pensioner has to pay full council tax and rent due to my income - so she is penalised because i work - i think second adult rebate should be discontinued

Only if after serious assessment of ability to pay, for instance a single person may have an infirm relative come to live with them with no ability to pay whatsoever

Should be means tested on first resident if in work and partners

some sort of support should be put in place for people who can prove they cannot pay the extra if the second adult rebate is taken away. Some sort of sliding scale would be better to help take all circumstances into account

Students should not have to pay council tax, and a person living with them should not have to carry a burden for them.

The decision on how much they pay should be based on joint income.

This is farcical as to no checks made to ascertain if certain residents are able to pay full Council Tax.

this is open to fraud

This should be adapted so if the second adult is working they should pay - the whole income of the household should be considered make the shortfall payable by the second adult. If the second adult is a student or young adult trying to find work (ie older child) they should not have to pay extra, this should stay in place for them.

When a second person is in the house who is working then household income increases to agree that the benefit should not be available.

Proposed Council Tax Support scheme

Do you have any further comments to make on the Councils proposed Council Tax Support scheme?

Any senior citizen over the age of 80 living alone should be exempt from paying council tax

As some of the council tax is based on emptying of bins, consider how often the refuse is collected? for instance my bins are emptied only once per month as I do not create a lot of waste, and I recycle and use garden waste, veg waste in compost? surely someone can come up with a scheme that benefits the house owner and the council?

Difficult decisions need to be made and it needs to be advertised better whatever is decided. Not just the advertiser but also the free local newspapers.

DONT SUPPORT ANYONE LIKE YOU HAVENT ME SCROUNGING SCUM

everyone who can pay should pay, i agree with removal of benefit on 2nd properties, if people are rich enough to have more than one house they should be rich enough to pay the bills for each of these

I am concerned that you have not mentioned the Single Person Discount of 25%. Do you intend to keep this discount? I do not think this should be removed. As a single working mother it is hard enough to manage and to find another 25% of an increasing Council Tax bill will be extremely difficult.

I am of the opinion that the best way forward to assist with Council Taxes that people who own subsequent homes should pay in full. Particularly if these homes have been vacant for sometime.

I and my wife are in our mid 70s, 'grafted' all our lives and because we were careful in paying a pension for our retirement, we are penalised by the additional charge on our council tax for the groups who receive tax benefits, and those who refuse to pay. **LET EVERY ONE PAY THEIR SHARE, DON'T INCREASE OUR TAX TO COMPENSATE FOR GOVERNMENT REDUCTIONS**

I do not understand why a three bedroom property in band a and a one bedroom property is also in band a. if you are serious about your council tax shurley this should be given same consideration.

I feel government should not be making cuts to council tax benefit scheme or any other benefit scheme for people who are in need of any genuine needs benefits schemes due to circumstances beyond their control.

I feel that an increase in council tax for the average working adult/family who have not benefited in the past from benefits/rebates is unfair. Council Tax is already a significant drain on income and services will not improve due to the increase.

I would hope that as a single parent and that there is only 1 adult in the household, that I would continue to receive support from the council by way of discount for council tax.

In increasing the amount of council tax people have to pay this could make people claim sickness benefit or not want to go out to work.

It needs to be looked at carefully with people getting plenty of notice of any proposed changes to the rate they pay.

It should be stay as it is.

It will have a massive impact on the vulnerable adults in our community
lets make it fair if we all pay a bit it will ease the situation for those who have always paid no matter where in the world we are from.

Many people are co-habiting with single parents but keep tenancies on flats in case of a breakdown in the relationship. Often they are unemployed these tenancies should be identified (utility bills) and terminated releasing properties to tax payers.

Multiple children families should pay proportionally more depending on the number of children they have

No charges should be made for houses that are empty.

No, but I would be very interested in seeing the results !

Stop spending money on things that are not needed just cos you think they look good e.g mucking up roads and things instead of helping people

Stop supporting foreigners and paying their bills. I lived abroad for 3 years If you didn't have a job you got nothing no hand outs or anything the same should apply. the country I lived in is part of the EU.

'Support scheme' should be the predominant word, something to support you in times of trouble, this, as with all other benefits should not be a sustainable optional alternate lifestyle to work.

Target the Streets, depending on the street depends how much Tax they pay. Doe Quarry, with dated house should be lowest band, as woodsetts due to location and good houses higher up.

Tax the scroungers and make them start to pay, it would be worthwhile to invest in finding the scroungers and stop their monies, they are the ones now complaining about losing money, I say tough get a job!

The council should look at the whole low incomes issue and should have a cap of say 8-10,000 of earned income before having to pay any council tax. Having to pay council tax when receiving income support or other benefits for low income workers is just plain silly.

This must not discriminate against the people who are already working but struggling to pay their bills, please do not increase my charges to offset others' - treat me fairly!

Why is it possible that certain residents in Rotherham are able to drink (alcohol) , smoke, drive, walk, talk, but not able to get out of bed for work or pay full Council tax.

yes it will be the usual people who will have to pay and all the people who cheat and lie will get away with it.

Proposed changes to Council tax discounts and exemptions

Do you have any further comments to make on the proposals regarding changes to Council Tax discounts?

A lot of people with second homes are council tenants, If they move back into their empty properties it should free up some council homes for those that need them.

Again, I am concerned that you have not mentioned the Single Person Discount of 25%. Do you intend to keep this discount? I do not think this should be removed. As a single working mother it is hard enough to manage and to find another 25% of an increasing Council Tax bill will be extremely difficult.

All the above allowances should NEVER have been given in the 1st place!

All the above should have been implemented before now.

Anyone who has two homes or leaves a home empty deserves to pay full council tax. If you can afford two homes then you can afford two council taxes. Many people would love just one home,

CHARGE THEM ALL IF YOU NEED MONEY THEN IT SHOULD BE RAN LIKE A BUSINESS

Council tax is supposed to be aimed at households paying a fair share of the costs of local services, how can that be fair if no one is living in a property? what benefit does the property receive in local services?

How can you justify charging council tax for an empty property - Bricks don't use any services - and any property which is being renovated is adding to the value of any area - charging this may mean more properties fall into disrepair, and create even more problems " costing money " for the council - such as vermin infestation, rubbish tipping, vandalism, etc etc.

i agree with most of them.

i believe most discounts on council tax are claimed dishonestly and the council could save thousands a year looking into this

I believe that you should carry on empty property exemption for atleast 3 months (if not six months). It can take landlords atleast 3 months to rent out the property again. After 3 months if the property is still empty the exemption should be removed and discount of 25% should be applied.

I strongly agree with all of these. Also, more needs to be done with empty houses to bring them back into use

I think that the 100%discount for empty and unfurnished homes should only be reduced to 50%, not to 25%. Homes inherited and proven to be on the market should be charged, but should have actual payment of the charges deferred until the property is sold and monies received by the beneficiary of the inheritance.

If it is being repaired structural no one can live in it so why should you get money from it. If someone is living in it then ok

If people have 2 homes they have enough money to pay the full amount of council tax.

Landlords encouraged to let properties if no incentive to keep empty is removed.

People who can afford a 2nd home can easily afford 2 lots of Council Tax.

Private landlords should be liable for 100% of council tax on empty properties as it is a money making scheme to 'buy to let'. Second homes should be 100% charge as nobody needs 2 homes it is a luxury

Proposal 5 - I think the council should charge 100% rates - there are too many empty houses that could be homes for some familys.

Re Q2, it should be taken into account why the home is in a state of repair. for cases such as flood damage or fire then they should get an exception, however if the repairs are due to the householder doing cosmetic wor, I feel that they should pay council tax.

Second homes should have to pay 100% council tax as alot of people struggle to have and pay for one home, why should people who can afford two homes eg, not buy to lets etc, benefit from this. Also, for question 2, maybe 50% would be more appropriate.

Section 5 is a nice idea but the hole point of council tax was 50% tax on peoples home and a 50% tax on the people in the homes, you cant remove people exemptions because they own a home they either dont use or dont use all the time. I understand this would be an easy win in a labour council were people with more than one property are seen as weathly and therefore the devil but i for one would not like to see myself as a landlord have to pay for council services multiple times because I have houses with no one in them, if no one is in them they are costing me money anyway, increasing my costs would mean that I would reduce my profit and therefore reduce my income tax bill not solving anything for the country as a whole just making me worse off, my tenants worse off as i would charge the ones i can rent out more money to compensate and making national coventry less money because of lower income tax receipts.

The above would encourage landlords to repair their second homes for use as rental residences leading to a better area which is less run-down. If they can afford a 2nd house they should pay the council tax for it!

The length of time taken to sell houses means that this could punish some people for aspiring to mive up the ladder

These changes will make sellers/developers stop hanging on for inflated prices.

These properties should include business premises

These proposals may speed the re letting of 'vacant' homes, meaning fewer people waiting for housing.

This again smacks of greed by a Labour Council. They are frightened to death that someone has got more than them.

Those people who have second homes or can afford renovations on additional properties should pay for this, vacant properties should be treated the same.

Very sensible proposals.

When a property is being renovated and is not lived in, you should not have to pay council tax until you have moved in. There could be a cap on this e.g. 6 months

whether you own one or one hundred homes they should all be paying full council tax the main amount of people with more than 2 houses are usually property developers and this is stopping young people from owning their own home so let them pay so money back into the system.

Why should people with a property portfolio that has worked hard to get it have to pay council tax on an empty property that they can't let out and people on benefits get away with it!

Would fully support the increase / removal of discounts for empty properties and second homes. Anything which encourages empty properties to be brought back into use, especially the longer term properties, is positive.

Comments through the Councils web site or by e-mail

The following are the comments were received through the council's web site general comment box or through email to the authority.

Although it was not possible to feed these into the numeric results the respondents may have also completed the consultation. All comments are listed here in full.

I was alarmed to see that I may have my 50% reduction in the community charge for limited occupation reassessed. We purchased this property on May 8th this year due to a loss of confidence in the Spanish banking system and this benefit played a major part in our decision to complete. We intend to be in our holiday home for only three months during any year and find it hard to understand why we should be asked to contribute more than we are paying at the moment. I appreciate that we are living in troubled times at the moment and we all have to pull our belts tighter. However having our standard running costs placed in danger of being increased so soon is a major upset. Would you please place on record our disappointment with the news and do what you can to make our decision to purchase the correct one.

I have read the report and several things came to my mind.

The Council have an opportunity to try to make the system fairer. This might involve making it simpler and cheaper to operate. Creating more tax bands could be an answer and upping the tax on the higher value property groups. Taxing the rich a bit more is going to be the long term solution for many taxation problems in Britain in the future.

Similarly taxing empty houses where clearly no attempts are being made to repair or sell to someone who might. Many residents who live in communities where more housing has been proposed look at the numbers of empty houses wondering why these lie empty and new ones are being built.

Any second homes need full tax payable despite what may be an infrequent use. It still needs its bin emptying, road cleaning etc. All the things a full time occupied house needs.

The Poll Tax which this system replaced had many disadvantages and was in many cases unfair.

Where it was perhaps not unfair was the taxation of households where there were a number of earners. Basically if exemptions and discounts are available to households where there are people genuinely in need of care, then the households where there are people getting a better value out of the system ought to pay more. Two pensioners who are struggling to pay council tax for the services, should not be disadvantaged by a family of four earners in a next door similar house. If there is a target figure of tax revenue to be obtained it should be taken in the fairest way. Property is often the fairest indication of income provided that the system can be tweaked for some glaring inequalities.

Re: changes to council tax benefit entitlement. I feel that since that the reduction in council revenues is a result of government cutting benefits generally then it is the people who are on benefits who should foot the bill. That would mean that the people currently paying no council tax should be expected to pay at least 10% since that is the percentage cut the government is imposing. As for single adult occupancy rebate - I feel that this charge is justified and merely balances the many households where adult occupancy is over and above the usual 2 adults.

i think everyone every people on benefits even if its £5 a month should pay council tax us what pay council tax get no different priveleges to them what dont pay it they get everything for nothing they can afford luxerys like booze and cigs and some are much better off on benefits then us taxpayers I am disappointed to read your proposals. We are considering letting our property to allow us to move to Wath. We cannot sell it. We will just about cover loan with the mortgage and after insurance and repairs we will not be in profit. I am worried that during periods of no tenant we will have to pay. I can understand that you need to make savings... Could a compromise of say 3 months exemption be allowed. After all, we will be paying council tax on the one we live in.

I am concerned that abolition of an exempt period for vacant lets will cause an unnecessary amount of admin for landlords and the council alike. Suggest it would be better to reduce it from 6 to 3 or 2 months to allow time for re-letting without any unnecessary short term billing.

I wish to put my point across regarding Council tax exemption proposals.

I currently own a property which is vacant and which is currently on the market and so I am therefore still paying a mortgage on the property. It is vacant as I am living with my boyfriend who is paying full council tax on his property. I would like nothing better than to sell my property as we are currently funding two mortgages and paying various bills. If I should have to pay full council tax for a property that I am not living in this would make day to day living extremely difficult (it is difficult enough at the moment anyway).

As the property is empty I am not using any services provided by the Local Authority and therefore think it is unreasonable to have to pay Council tax for services which are not being used by the property. I would like my views to be taken into account when the proposals are considered. I would object strongly to any change made to the single occupancy discount. Why not consider adding a little to multiple occupancy properties as it seems to me that these households could afford this change rather than the other way round. [I would assume there are a lot more of them as well.]

The other suggestion I have to make is that [and this is not going to be received well] each local authority person receiving a pension, past and present should sacrifice a small amount for the good of the majority. I say this as a person aged 68 still working and doing a job most people would be horrified at the suggestion that they do. I have never claimed benefits other than the one we are now discussing and object strongly to subsidising anyone else in their retirement.

I work at my age because I have no pension public or private, and prefer to retain some self respect for as long as I can. Please look at the multiple properties that are dishonestly claiming benefits. I can say this as I witness it very frequently.

A very frustrated council tax payer

We have looked at the Council Tax Proposals and feel it is necessary to object to Proposal 3. We currently rent out a property, there are short periods between tenants and feel it is inappropriate and would require excessive management time from the Council and us to administer the payments. We suggest a short period ie a minimum of 3 months of being except from Council Tax should remain. We are in this predicament (landlords) not through choice and feel we should not be further penalised.

I think that everyone of working age should be made to make a contribution towards their council tax, however small that may be, this would encourage them to look for a job. I do not think that it is a good idea for council tax bills to increase to cover the cost of people who cannot be bothered to work. Those sorts of people make it hard for the genuine people who really need support and help when they are faced with life changing issues. I think that if someone can afford to buy a second property (not to rent out) they can probably afford to pay council tax with a lesser or no discount.

I don't agree with the new proposal's, i'm a single mum with 2 children, i get no support from their father and struggle to pay my bills and put food on the table. Try taking more money from people who earn ridiculous amount's of money or better still stop letting thousands of illegal immigrants into the country. British people are fed-up having to hand over hard earned cash to people that should simply not be in this country. The government let's these people in, so the government should pay for these people, not everyday tax payer's. One other thing to mention is why do we need green bin collection's every 2 weeks in the winter. When they come do the bin's on our road, there might be 1 or 2 bins put out, but chances are that they're not even full, so why waste money sending the dustbin men out, to empty a handfull of bins.

It would be unfair to not allow some level of discount to single people and stopping this might cause real additional hardship where there is a single parent.

I don't think there should be a limit on council tax rebate as this would be affecting the poorest who are already being unfaily penalised in spending cuts.

I would like to voice my opinion that I totally disagree with your proposal to remove the current 6 months free council tax charge on empty properties and would urge you to ensure that this free period of grace is maintained. Many people, including myself, have been unable to sell our properties due to the current financial difficulties whilst having been forced to move through a variety of circumstances. Whilst my house is currently rented out, and the council tax paid in full by the tenant, there is a possibility that the property may be left vacant for a short period in between tenants. I would strongly resent having to pay council tax on a property for which I am receiving no benefits - there is no need to empty bins, provide schools etc. etc. because nobody is living there in these periods.

As an alternative, I would urge the council to consider making cuts in other unnecessary areas such as the wasting of money on council lunches, meetings, training courses, hospitality, the ever increasing incidence of speed humps, the contributions to the safety camera partnership, and so on. I am sure that savings in these areas would more than make up for any shortfall in the central government grant and would allow all Rotherham residents to continue to enjoy the benefits to which they are currently entitled. This would truly show thatthis is the borough "Where Everyone Matters" to coin a phrase!

I have read this article and dread what is coming. Once again it will be people like me who will bear the full cost. We both live on very small pensions. Try collecting Council tax from people who will not pay or those that fiddle the system. If I have to pay then so should everyone who lives in Rotherham. I am fed up with subsidising everyone who arrives here.

my suggestion is that people who buy a three bedroom semi-detached in a band B or C then proceed to have a huge extension which then turns the property into a five or six bedroomed house should therefore pay double the council tax bill. It was our choice to live in a small two bedroomed bungalow in a D band area, so why should we pay more for living in a smaller property. If you start in the Broom area and Grange estate you would get thousands and thousands of extra council tax money. It should be based on how many bedrooms and people live in the house. Another suggestion is, do we need a chief executive and a leader of the council, that would save a least a £100,000 a year and in these cost cutting days do we need a mayor who must run up large expenses and councillor's who are on equivalent of a scale two clerical, plus all their expenses. Also may I suggest that people pay for computer use in the Libraries and that it does not come out of the council tax. £2 an hour is not an ! unreasonable amount, and it would stop time wasters playing games on them and listening to music.

With regard to your letter on council tax benefit cuts. I think vulnerable people on benefits through disability who are declared unfit or unable to work and who have need of a live in carer should be exempt. It would put such people in more poverty as they would be unable to make up the shortfall in their income by working. Their live in carer should also be exempt depending on the level of care supplied because if they are to take a job to pay for their council tax then they will not be available to provide support and care for the vulnerable person. I also think that single parents on benefits with preschool children should be exempt as a young child should not have to go hungry. If the parents do not have support of their family they would need to pay someone to look after their child while they worked and this may not be feasible if the parent is unskilled. It's no use saying a person who cannot afford children should not have them, the fact is if they do have a child then that child should not have to suffer or go hungry. As for parents with children of school age we are already reading in the local papers of children been sent to school hungry in the Canklow area and I am concerned also that cuts could put additional pressure on families such as these. I hope the council will be able to make savings where it can without putting undue pressure on the most vulnerable people in its care.

I think that this new council tax scheme is unfair as you are going to make people who live on their own and not working pay money towards council tax, when they have the lowest income. A person on jobseekers allowance living on their own receives £65 per week that is barely enough to live on as it is without paying council tax at £4 a week. You say your not going to touch pensioners but they receive double the amount of benefit per week than a single working age person. As per usual the poor are going to suffer. Perhaps you could save £4.8 million on something else you waste money on and help people that need it. For instance you could stop wasting money on painting shed doors and gutters and make sure people can afford to live in their homes instead. Or stop sending the grass cutters out on bank holidays and sundays when you have to pay them more. I hope you abolish this ridiculous idea of making people struggle with money more than they do already. I pay my council tax! so my views are not for myself but people on low incomes. In fact I would rather pay an extra £5 a month on my council tax if it meant someone else wasn't going without.

just had text about new scheme which is taking part in april i think it is wrong and if we looked after our own we wouldn't be in such a mess to start with why should our people suffer and our pensioners who most have worked all their lives to be able to have a great retirement i think on the other hand people who don't want to work and is just claiming cause they're too lazy then yes i agree with this change but don't take it out of our pensioners

Let those who have paid into the system over the years and deserve benefits have funding Those who haven'tget no help

These changes will not affect me however I do think that a person who is in employment and living on their own should retain the 25% discount. I do think that people who have a second home should pay full council tax on that property.

My comments relate to Proposals 2, 3 and 4 - proposed changes to council tax for empty properties. These are outrageous proposals, to which I would object most strongly. Aside from the fact that property owners would, in effect be paying in full for services not used (waste collection etc), they would have a severe financial effect on people already reeling from continual attacks on living standards. These proposals would represent a savage increase for people caught in the position of having an empty property, which is already not desirable for the owner, for a number of obvious reasons. They would severely penalise those who are struggling to sell an empty property or are trying to fund the renovation of an empty property, for whatever reason (including the lethargic property market), and who may already be in financial difficulties.

It would also be a real deterrent to those people who are in a position to buy a new property before the sale completes on their existing home (although there may be few of these in the current economic climate). These measures would further stagnate the property market.

Buy to let investors would be deterred from investing in properties, for fear of the inevitable periods during which they lie empty. To compensate, rents would increase, as landlords try to compensate for these additional costs. Fewer people would enter the buy to let market, creating further increases in rents. If buy to let landlords sell their properties, it clearly would impact on housing waiting lists and the demand for rented property which is not met by local authorities.

This proposal is ill considered, short sighted and demonstrates an ignorance of the economic impact on those affected and the local economy. Local authorities who engage in such savage additional taxation methods would see an exodus of property investors to other areas, where local authorities take the more intelligent, broader view. As for me I believe the council is made up of people experienced enough with the daily problems and needs of their own people and should try to protect and look to help them in such a way that people will be contented..and in addition the councils should try reconsider their amount of tax benefit

I believe single adult discount should remain for folks who live on their own with no other adults in the house. It's hard enough making ends meet on your own without the need of reducing the 25% discount. Also may be an idea to look at the way child benefit has been re-structured on household income, one can then create council tax bans on household income