

Appendix 1B - Town and Parish Council Consultation responses to LCTS scheme 2017/18 options

Town & Parish Council

Arreton

Comments

the members of the Parish Council have now considered the question and feel that, although it is not unreasonable to look such costs, given the current economic climate, it is unfortunate that it is the lowest paid who will be most affected.

Bembridge

Bembridge Parish Council fully appreciates the difficult situation the Isle of Wight Council is facing with budgets cuts and ongoing austerity measures being passed down from Central Government.

However the Council Tax reduction scheme is in place to assist those most in need and therefore we disagree with the approach to reduce the support any further from the scheme for 2016/17.

The Parish Councillors may wish to respond to the detailed survey on an individual basis as it proves difficult to gain a consensus for every single option.

Chale

Councillors are in agreement that the council should keep the current council tax reduction scheme. In order to meet the funding shortfall they would be in favour of reducing the number of councillors and capping the wages of senior council staff at £80000pa.

- Regarding option 1 to reduce the level of CTR support from 80% to either 75% or 70%, 75% would be preferable to 70%, however they would prefer the shortfall to be met by the cap on wages and number of councillors suggested above.
- Regarding option 2 to reduce the period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive CTR from 13 weeks to 4 weeks, Councillors feel this is fair and are in agreement.
- They disagree with option 3 to remove the element of a work related activity component in the calculation of the current scheme for new employment support allowance claimants, as they feel the current system for deciding on the ESA work-related activity group is unfair.
- They disagree with option 4 to limit the number of dependent children within the calculation of CTR to a maximum of two from any new children born on or after 1 April 2017 as they feel this would be discriminatory.
- They did not feel there was enough information to comment on option 5 sufficiently which is to remove the entitlement to the severe disability premium where another person is paid universal credit (carers element).
- They disagree with option 6 to limit CTR to a maximum council tax band C charge on the basis that larger families need larger homes and would want this to stay the same.
- They agree with option 7 to set a minimum level of CTR support at £2 per week and feel this is cost effective.
- Councillors disagree that there should be an increase in the level of council tax as this would require a referendum and mean more people losing out.

Councillors disagree that savings should be found from reducing or cutting other council services. They question whether as much as £22 million now needs to be saved given recent decisions to delay loan re-payments and generally feel it is unfair to ask this question without more information.

- They wouldn't want to see an increase in council tax or reduce the funding available for other council services and return to their original suggestion of reducing the number of councillors and capping wages at a maximum of £80,000.

Whilst Councillors completed the survey to the best of their ability they wanted me to feedback that they felt that it was designed more for individuals and not PCs, and that there was not enough information in general to fully answer all the questions.

Freshwater

Councillors felt that they wished to express their opposition to the scheme. The Parish Council does fully understand the current financial constraints and the need for savings to be made. However it appears to us that the proposals seek to achieve these savings by taking away money from the poorest members of the community. We would suggest that this is not a fair or proper approach and that the people likely to be affected are simply not able to make further savings themselves. Indeed they may well be facing other benefit cuts which the government is now introducing.

Your online survey seems to expect that those commenting should say how savings can otherwise be made. With respect that is not our function and we do not have the detailed knowledge to be able to do that. I can only say that the view of the Parish Council is that the most vulnerable members of the community should not be affected in manner proposed.

Gurnard

The Parish Council understands the problems in the budget deficit for the IW Council but feels that concessions should be made for low income working families.

Lake

The Parish Council is alarmed that the government appears to be flirting with the idea of extending referendum principles to town and parish council precepts. As you know, on the Isle of Wight there are many examples of services that have had to be withdrawn by the Isle Of Wight Council, but have been kept thanks to Town and Parish Councils stepping in to maintain them. Public toilets and libraries are but two examples, and maintenance of principal parks is another that is likely to come our way as the principal Council struggles under the capping regime imposed by Government.

In Lake the Parish Council has taken responsibility for two sets of toilets since 2011, increasing the precept from £25k to 37.5k to pay for the costs of this. This year we are taking on the third set, on the Revetment, which local people and business tell us are vital to the holiday trade that is the cornerstone of the island's economy. In order to test this we recently circulated a questionnaire to every household in Lake. Of 400 returned, 89% said they would willingly accept a precept increase of £4-5/annum (£10-12k on the precept) to ensure that all three sets of toilets remain open under the Parish Council. This may not be possible if the parish precept is capped. Our own 'referendum' has been carried out at minimal cost using the Parish magazine Ripples, whereas the idea of a government-imposed referendum would be likely to cost more than the additional sum it is sought to raise.

The Parish Council urges the Isle of Wight Council therefore to oppose the suggestion of extending referendum principles to Town and Parish Councils, and asks you to use your influence to ensure it does not come about.

Newport

Newport Parish Council opposes sections a, c, d and g of the consultation document.

Niton

“Niton and Whitwell Parish Council is aware of the detrimental impact to local families of cuts in benefits and is strongly opposed to any cuts affecting families and children; the Parish Council could only support option 2, the reduction of the period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Relief from 13 weeks to 4 weeks.”

Ryde	<p>“That whatever decision the Isle of Wight Council takes it also implements an effective, secure and fair process for the protection of those poorest and vulnerable to any proposed changes in the Scheme.”</p>
Shanklin	<p>CONSULTATION – IWC – COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME</p> <p>Members’ noted the Report & highlighted the concern of the impact of the proposals on disadvantaged families.</p>
Totland	<p>Totland Parish Council fully appreciates the difficult situation the Isle of Wight Council is facing with budget cuts and ongoing austerity measures being passed down from Central Government.</p> <p>However, the Council Tax reduction scheme was put in place to assist those most in need and therefore we disagree with the approach to reduce the support any further from the scheme.</p>
Ventnor	<p>RESPONSE</p> <p>The Town Council’s resolution in Minute 143 states:</p> <p>i) none of the options set out in the current consultation on changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme are supported;</p> <p>ii) the Isle of Wight Council be informed that, notwithstanding the seriousness of its predicted Budget deficit for 2017/18, savings that affect only residents on low incomes are unacceptable;</p> <p>and</p> <p>iii) asks its Clerk to submit a response to the consultation accordingly.</p>

Wootton

Wootton does not want it to affect residents that are in hardship and, therefore in need of this benefit.

Councillor Barrie Hailstone of Wootton PC stated:-

“I note with some dismay that there is no "Option" made or considered relating to Immigrants/Refugees. It is my understanding that Unitary Authorities have to subsidise in full such individuals - housing and full benefits, which clearly must cover Council Tax.

As, as it has been reported, the IOW Council has welcomed/or is considering to welcome such persons, then why has this not been taken into account or considered in the proposed rethink of the CTR. It would be innocuous not to do so. We cannot expect to deprive our citizens who are in need of such benefits, so that Immigrants/Refugees can still be fully subsidised. If this be the case could be a case for revolt.”