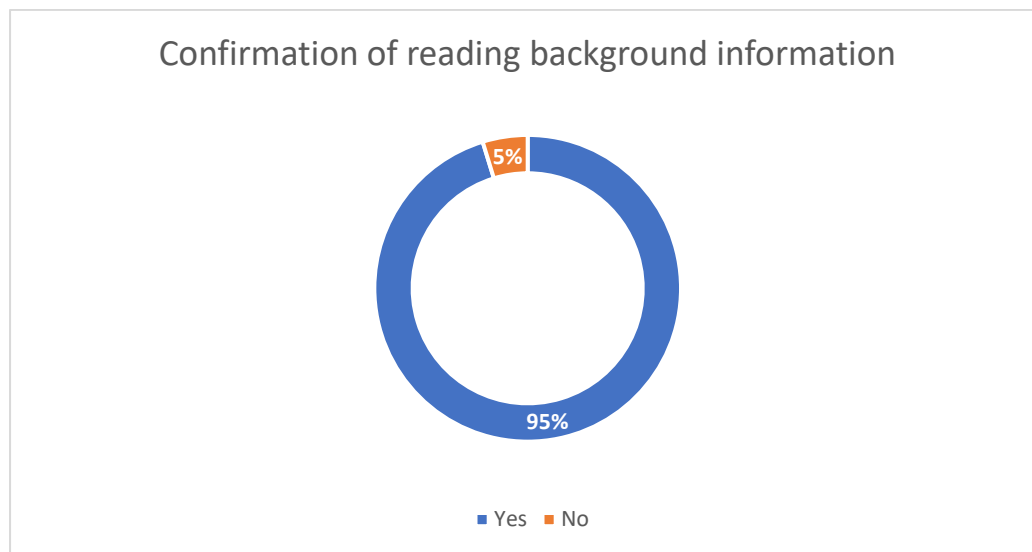


Results from the IWC Local Council Tax Support Scheme Consultation 2023/24

The above consultation was undertaken between 3 August 2022 and 28 September 2022. On completion, a total of 274 responses had been received. The charts below detail the responses received for each question asked of the participants.

I have read the background information about the Local Council Tax Support scheme.

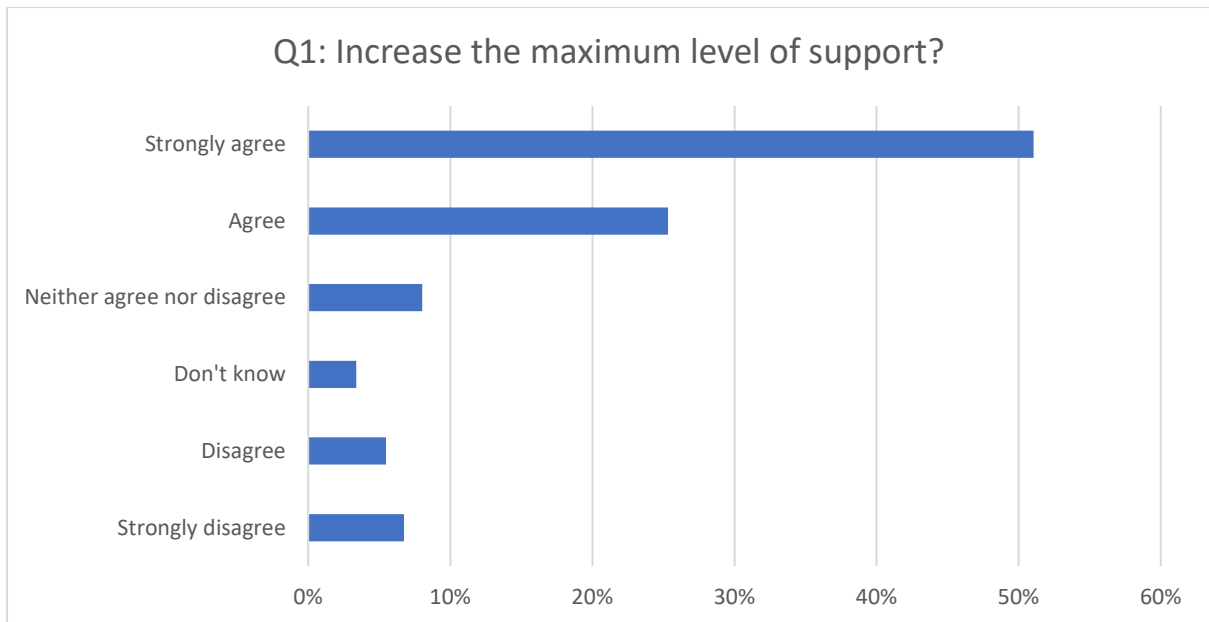
261 respondents (95%) indicated that they had read the background information about the Local Council Tax Support scheme, which equates to 100% of participants. 13 participants (5%) indicated that they had not yet read the background information which accompanied the scheme, as was indicated by the introduction to the survey.



Question 1 [Option 1]: Do you agree with increasing the maximum level of support?

There was a total of 237 responses to this question.

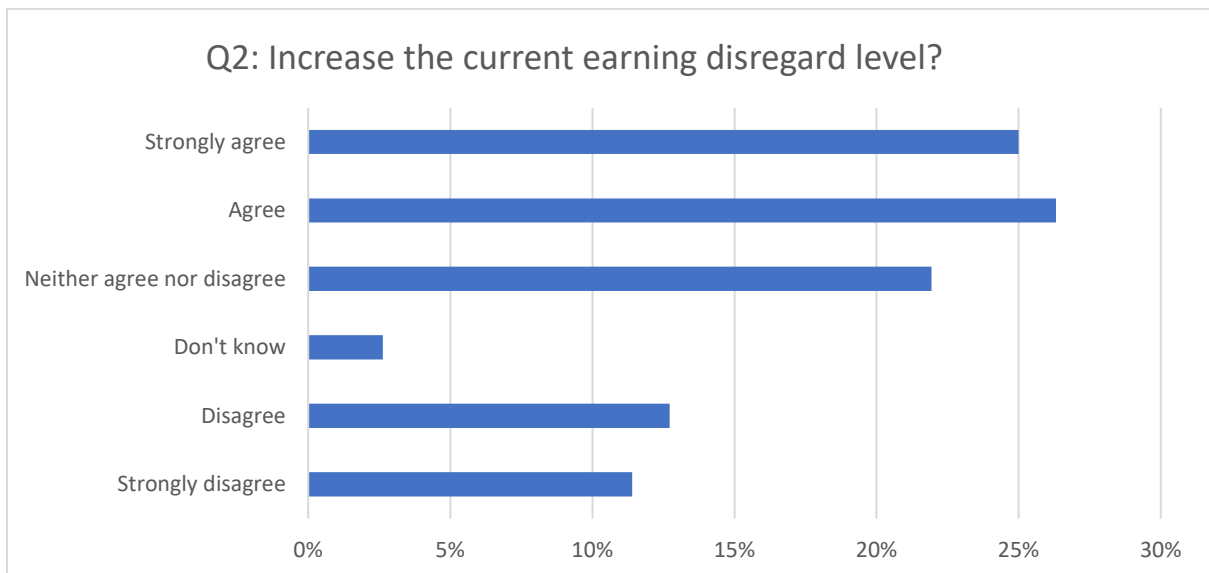
Of these, 181 participants (76%) indicated that they agreed with Option 1 – the increase of the maximum level of support for working age claimants from 65% to 70% as proposed by the Isle of Wight Council. 29 participants (12%) did not agree with this option and 27 (11%) of participants responded that they were unsure whether they agree. A further 37 participants chose not to answer this question



Question 2 [Option 2]: Do you agree with increasing the current earnings disregard level?

There was a total of 228 responses to this question.

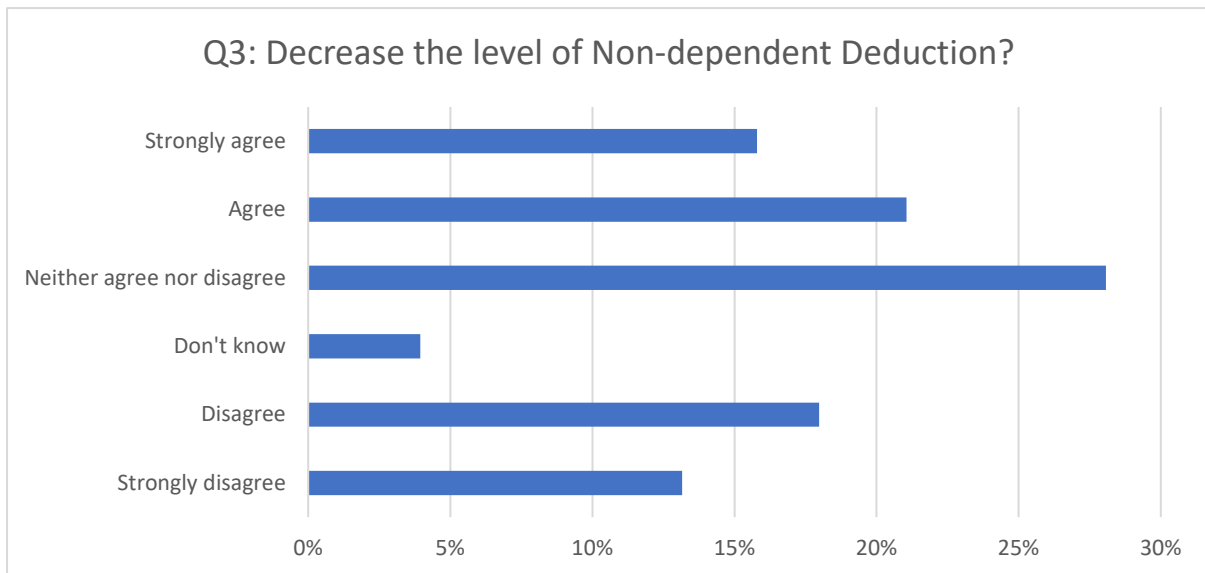
Of these, 117 participants (51%) indicated that they agreed with Option 2 – the increase of earnings disregard from £25 per week to £30 per week as proposed by the Isle of Wight Council. 55 participants (24%) stated that they did not agree with Option 2 and 56 participants (25%) responded that they were unsure whether they agree or disagree. A further 46 participants chose not to answer this question.



Question 3 [Option 3]: Do you agree with decreasing the level of Non-Dependant Deduction?

There was a total of 228 responses to this question.

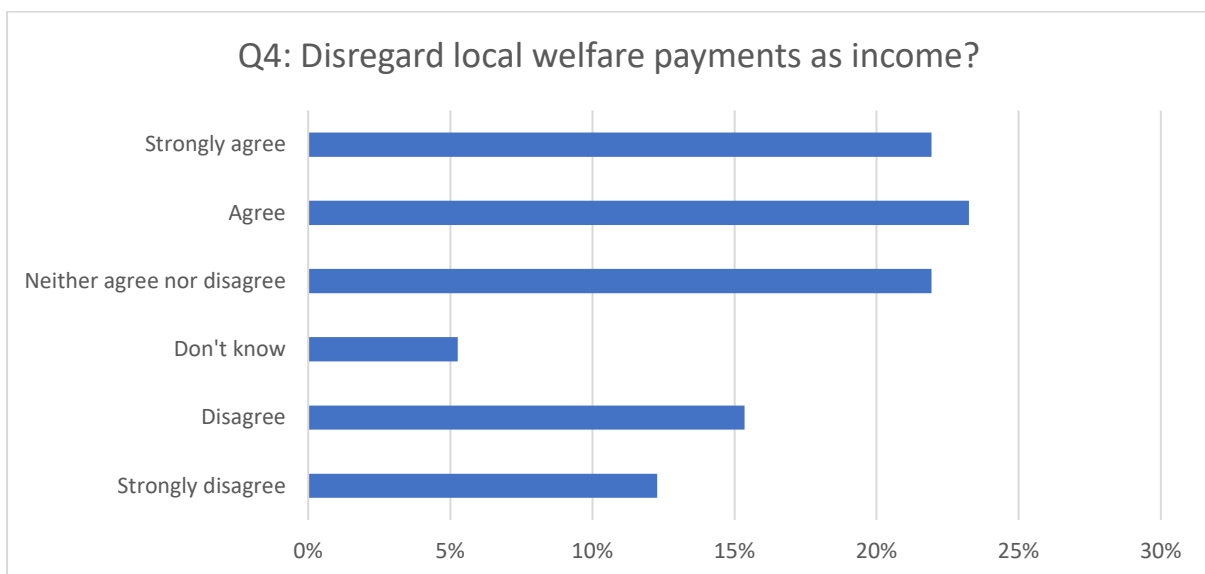
Of these, 84 participants (37%) indicated that they agreed with Option 3 - to decrease the level of non-dependant deduction from £2 per week to £1 per week as proposed by the Isle of Wight Council. 71 participants (31%) stated that they did not agree with Option 3 and 73 participants (32%) responded that they were unsure whether they agree or disagree. A further 46 participants chose not to answer this question.



Question 4 [Option 4]: Do you agree with disregarding local welfare payments as income?

There was total of 228 responses to this question.

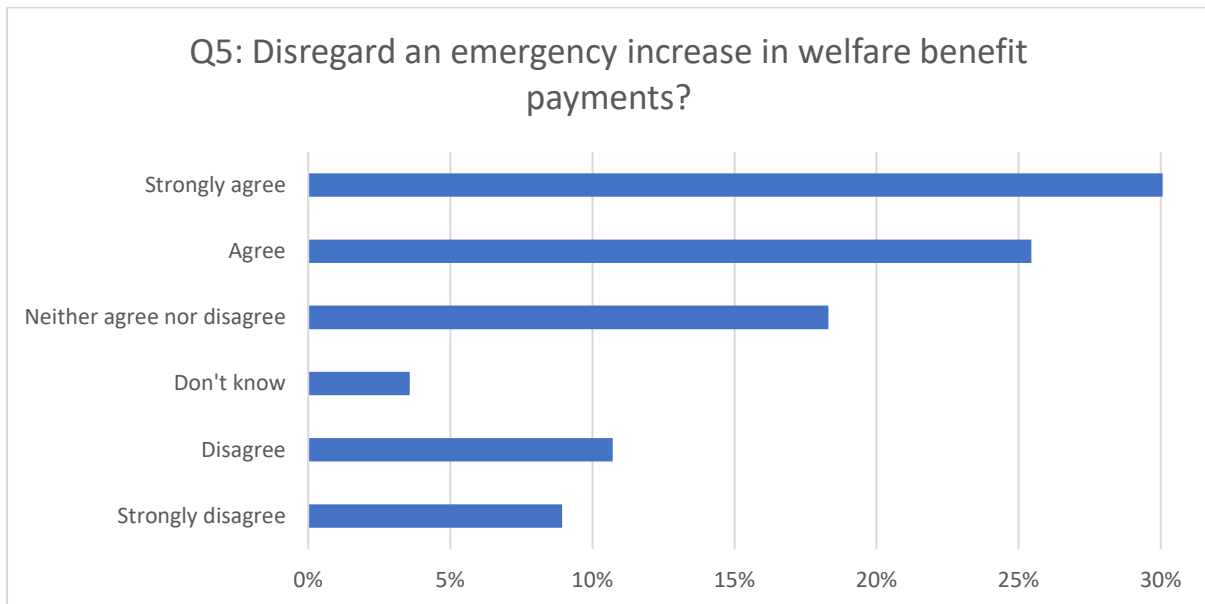
Of these, 103 participants (45%) indicated that they agreed with Option 4 – to disregard local welfare payments as income as proposed by the Isle of Wight Council. 63 participants (27%) stated that they did not agree with Option 4 and 62 participants (27%) were unsure whether they agree or disagree. A further 46 participants chose not to answer this question.



Question 5 [Option 5]: Do you agree with disregarding an emergency increase in welfare benefit payments?

There was a total of 224 responses to this question.

Of these, 131 participants (58%) indicated that they agree with Option 5 – to disregard an emergency increase in welfare payments as proposed by the Isle of Wight Council. 44 participants (20%) stated they did not agree with Option 5 and 49 participants (22%) were unsure whether they agree or disagree. A further 50 participants chose not to answer this question.



Question[s] 6 and 7 [Alternative 1 and 2]: Do you agree with Alternatives 1 and 2?

The consultation described two alternatives to the proposed scheme changes– whether the scheme should stay the same as it currently is (Alternative 1), or whether there should be a reduction in the maximum level of Local Council Tax Support to 60% to find savings.

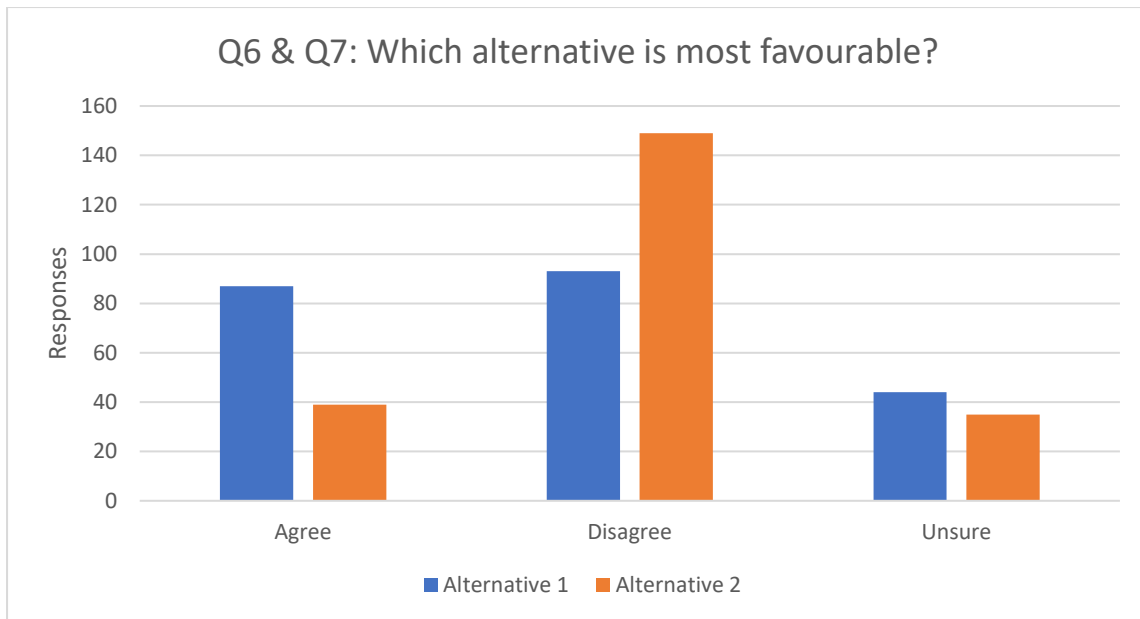
The graph below illustrates the preference of the two Alternatives to the participants by asking whether they agreed or disagreed with each proposed Alternative.

There were 224 responses to these questions.

Of these, 87 participants (39%) indicated that they agreed with Alternative 1, whereas 93 participants (42%) indicated that they did not agree; while a further 44 participants (20%) were unsure.

39 participants (17%) indicated that they agreed with Alternative 2, whereas 149 participants (67%) indicated that they did not agree; while a further 35 participants (16%) were unsure.

A further 50 participants chose not to answer these questions.



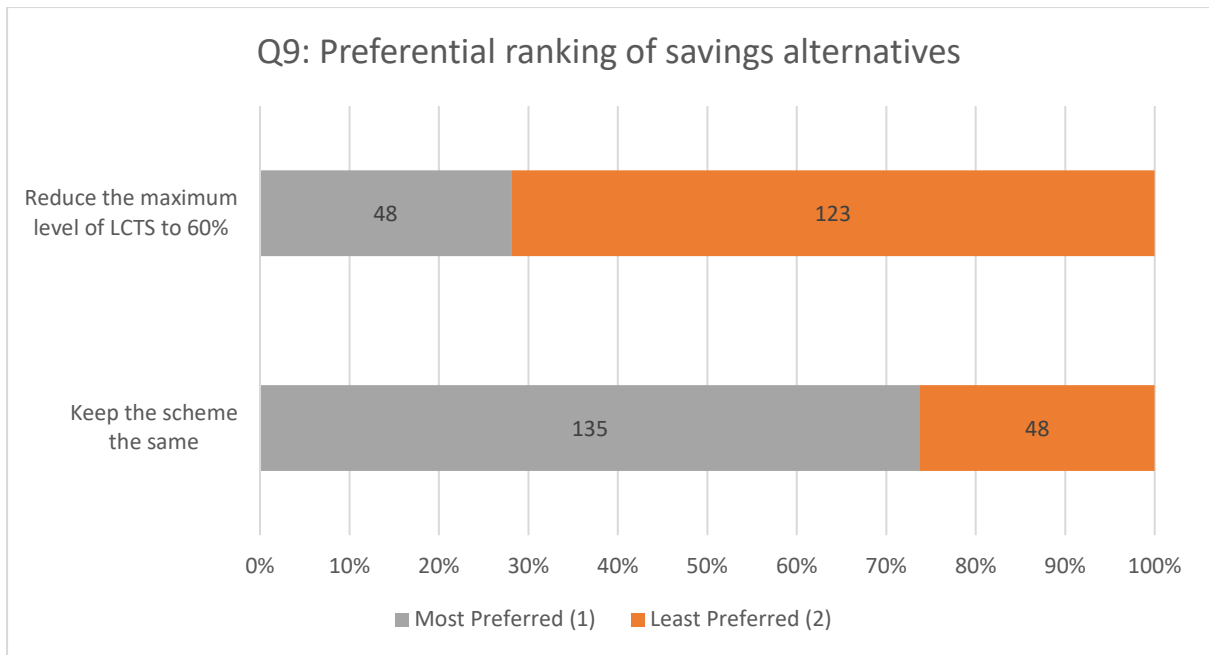
Question 8 [Alternative 1 and 2]: If the council was to choose these alternative options to make savings, what would be your order of preference?

The table and graph below detail how the participants of the consultation ranked the Alternative options in order of preference from 1 and 2, where a score of 1 indicates the most preferred Alternative and 2 indicates the least preferred Alternative.

The table shows that 135 participants stated their most preferred alternative was to keep the scheme as it is currently, and 123 respondents stated their least preferred alternative was to reduce the maximum support to 60%.

Order of Preference	Keep the Scheme the Same (Alternative 1)	Reduce maximum support to 60% (Alternative 2)
Most Preferred (1)	135	48
Least Preferred (2)	48	123

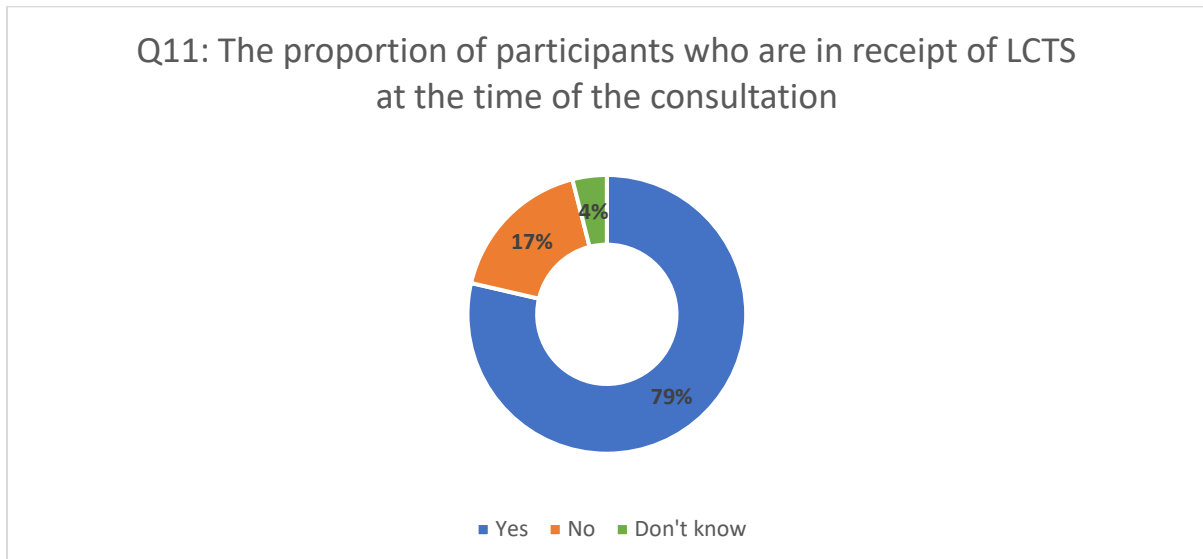
The graph below visually displays the favourability of these different Alternatives, as stacked out of 100% totals to visualise relative preference against other options.



Question 11: Are you, or someone in your household, getting Local Council Tax Support at this time?

There was a total of 201 responses to this question.

Of these, 158 participants (79%) indicated that they are in receipt of Local Council Tax Support at the time of the consultation while 35 participants (17%) answered that they were not. 8 participants (4%) did not know whether they are getting Local Council Tax Support at this time. A further 73 participants chose not to answer this question.



Comments from the open-ended questions on the consultation.

Question 9: If you disagree with the options detailed above, please use the space below if you would like the council to consider any other options.

<u>1.</u>	Support all people that need the help. The ones who work and supply the money.
<u>2.</u>	For the last decade, the Council has been balancing the budget on the backs of the disabled. Stop trying to make us pay more. When you do these figures, make sure that the alternatives are not suggested as the solution, for many of us object to the alternatives.
<u>3.</u>	The council should go further, restoring support to 75%, and then more when resources allow.
<u>4.</u>	I would like to see council tax hiked dramatically on second homes and all homes not purpose built as holiday homes but let out or used as such. The income from this could reduce the council tax for everybody else.
<u>5.</u>	Should not be charged council tax if disabled and on pip
<u>6.</u>	Reducing the level of LCTS does not work. People are already struggling to make ends meet and are preparing to choose between heating and eating. For me it also includes lighting. The current scheme is not ideal for those on the lowest income either but it's better than any of the alternatives suggested which are giving with one hand and taking with another.
<u>7.</u>	I feel those on low incomes should be getting more help towards there council tax minimum wage is hard at the best of times
<u>8.</u>	increase base to support 75% this covers all on low to no income who need help
<u>9.</u>	People on benefits need more support as the cost of living is rising dramatically
<u>10.</u>	I am already struggling with my outgoings on the benefits i am receiving, if you reduce the amount, I will be getting it will make. Life even harder for me. I think keeping it as it is fair to everyone because we know I what we have to pay and try our best to manage through these difficult times. I don't even know how I am going to get through this winter this all the price hikes, I will have to keep my heating off to be able to manage at least trying to pay the bills. Which will affect my health with the coldness
<u>11.</u>	Help should be more targeted towards working families on low wages not on benefits. Any extra costs should be met by second holiday homeowners on the island. They should pay a lot more especially as there is such a severe shortage of houses to rent and buy at affordable prices. If you doubled their council tax this could be used to help others because if can afford to buy a second home, I don't think it will be a hardship for them.
<u>12.</u>	I'm not sure
<u>13.</u>	Max rebate should be increased to 70% as the Independents PROMISED last year.

<u>14.</u>	return the lcts scheme to 100% reduction for claimants in receipt of pip / ESA benefits, who are not physically or mentally able to work.
<u>15.</u>	As a disabled person living alone, I am struggling to pay my Council Tax bill every month. If the reduction goes against me, I might not be able to pay at all because of the competing rising costs of food and power. I'm sure that the Council would rather receive something rather than nothing from me, so I favour a 70% reduction or keeping it at 65% if necessary. The Council need to look at charging second homeowners a higher amount. Housing stock is in short supply because of people who own but do not occupy homes here. A higher charge for those that have thousands to spare is fairer than trying to squeeze pennies out of people at the bottom of the earning ladder.
<u>16.</u>	We do not need a new COUNCIL BOSS on £138,000 the last one was a waste of money so we don't need a new one
<u>17.</u>	Disagree with both of the above, would prefer a benefits tested increase to a 100% for those on the most basic benefit, for example £75 per week basic universal credit for single person on JSA. This could decrease for those working and receiving benefits, and for those with long term illness on universal credit (not PIP) for example who receive more.
<u>18.</u>	People who are disabled, on benefits, should receive 100% discount. We should be top of the list for assistance.
<u>19.</u>	How about councillors taking a pay cut!!!! Stop buying mainland properties and stop building!!
<u>20.</u>	Because of the current situation and knowing that things will be much worse for the poorest especially the elderly, sick and disabled I feel that the council tax reduction should go up and benefit increases not taken as income, there are a lot of vulnerable people like myself who don't get the winter fuel allowance or help with fuel bills, because we don't pay directly, our landlord owns the meters, we still have to pay all the increases as the landlord has put rent, electricity and laundry token prices up, but we get no help. And don't mention the household support fund, so embarrassing and humiliating to have to account for every penny we spend and what on, I like many others with mental and physical health issues find that just too intrusive, I would rather go without.
<u>21.</u>	Increase support as household finances are being stretched further in current financial crisis, this has biggest effect on those with least income.
<u>22.</u>	Just increase it!
<u>23.</u>	no alternative options as the council work for the people and not to make money off the people
<u>24.</u>	Check thoroughly who is the most needy. Family's should be prioritised. Single people can work more hrs if necessary.
<u>25.</u>	Helping residents by increasing the council tax support will benefit to many households that they straggling to pay the other bills and ensure food and clothes for their family especially who have child. Thanks
<u>26.</u>	I think you need to consider how self-employed people are not entitled to council tax support. Currently the minimum income floor is used when working out support

	for council tax which is really unfair and leaves a lot of people struggling to pay council tax
<u>27.</u>	Reducing the maximum level of support at a time when family budgets are being absolutely crippled by rising costs of groceries, utilities etc. is not acceptable.

Question 10: If you have any further comments to make regarding the LCTS Scheme that you haven't had opportunity to raise elsewhere, please use the space below.

<u>1</u>	Stop trying to balance the budget on the backs of the disabled like the Tories have done the last few years! The disabled should be paying less council tax and instead both in current and real terms we are paying more.
<u>2</u>	My hours were increased, therefore more income, I lost most of it on universal credit and having to pay more council tax, I wish I'm not bothered
<u>3</u>	I think couples with children with a child with a disability should be able to claim lcts regardless of couples earnings
<u>4</u>	Everybody is having a tough time at the moment - we can't afford higher council tax.
<u>5</u>	Given the current cost of living crisis, all efforts have to be made to reduce the burden on less well-off households. Is there any chance of revising the scheme in this financial year?
<u>6</u>	Stop disregarding any income. People who get disability benefits are receiving an income - disability is still income and it should be counted against any LCTS. If their Disability payments are high, they should get no LCTS - why should able bodied, working people pay more, whilst disabled get income ignored - hardly equality is it.
<u>7</u>	Disabled should not be charged
<u>8</u>	The alternatives you have suggested are pointless. It may increase the level of LCTS but by increasing the rate of council tax your writing off the increased support. Social care and the protection of the vulnerable on this island are already shocking they do not need the funding cut. Perhaps look at decreasing Council spending elsewhere.
<u>9</u>	Those people on special diets needing more help due to disabilities have more out lays
<u>10</u>	the system does need changing to a more across all level approach to even income based with lowest at 75% then increment as you earn more this would help all
<u>11</u>	Consideration to pensioners who don't get Pension Credit.
<u>12</u>	Mixed age couples who are disabled loose out big time. I retired from ESA last year, went to pension, got £35 a week LESS income in total but had to pay EXTRA £100 plus council Tax a year as rate of rebate went down as pension not a passported benefit. VERY UNFAIR. My local councillor helped me get a discretionary payment equivalent to the difference, but it was a long fight and many others still suffering. Please bring in some rule so that newly retired mixed age who would if still getting ESA get full rebate continue to do so if no other change to their disability status other than simply becoming state pension age. (Their disabled status could be easily verified by DWP). IT IS VERY UNFAIR. If I was a single pensioner I would get 100%

	rebate, if a pension age couple ditto .. but as mixed age, despite my wife & I being severely disabled, high rate care and mobility for her on PIP and for me too ... we lose out. Please talk to Cllr Paul Brading about it as he is keen to make the system fairer.
<u>13</u>	To alter the benefit now with the large increase in fuel is fool hardy you will end up with more debt. You need to cut back on unnecessary spending within the council.
<u>14</u>	I know that LCTS does need to change for the better as it is hard to make payments that are high each month when all other bills are rising as well. I feel that low income families are struggling to meet basic living needs which can then result in falling into debt. The pandemic and rising living costs are hurting all financially and help is needed ASAP.
<u>15</u>	when i moved back to the isle of wight after many years away from my homeland i was and still am, in receipt of several social benefits, PIP and ESA were awarded after my physical and mental state forced me to cease working. i have worked since the age of 16 and since approx. 10 years ago, at the age of 49, my whole life changed, from being prosperous in an exceedingly well-paid job to becoming homeless. the council tax support for myself was at 100% reduction but since last year all claimants for LCTS must now contribute, this i find unfair and wrong since the reasons given were that the extra funds were supposed to support those in need. that's exactly myself and many others who found that instead of being supported 100% had to now contribute. unfair and unjust.
<u>16</u>	I would like the Council to consider the impact of any changes to younger disabled people. Many of us are in extreme financial difficulty thanks to housing benefit not being available to us except through the extremely flawed Universal Credit system, and the energy/ cost of living crisis. There is no capacity to pay more and no future likelihood of our situation improving.
<u>17</u>	Revert passported benefits to include those in receipt of contribution-based ESA, where Support Group and PIP or other disability benefit
<u>18</u>	I'll give you a heads-up notification right here and now. Paying your council tax increases will be 100% the last thing I will pay. My energy prices increase in the next 6 months will leave me with a monthly deficit out of my benefits. So your council tax will not be paid if I have no money left. On that you have my word.
<u>19</u>	My wife is long term disabled and we appreciate the help you do give. Over the years we have had the five-room allowance removed from our rent resulting in us having to move, the tax support changed from 100% to its current levels, we now have to find £74.00 a month. Benefits have not gone up to reflect this and the current rent allowance is nowhere near the current cost of renting, we were a lot worse off than we use to be before the cost of living crisis arrived and any more cost increases on top of the pending energy increases will bury us.
<u>20</u>	Think what it must be like to live on what the minimum amount is! These are human beings! Imagine they are relatives or friends. They are the same as them. They deserve help!
<u>21</u>	Council tax support for those on the lowest income should be 100% like other places in the UK.
<u>22</u>	If people can't afford to pay council tax or rent this would inevitably lead to even more cost to the council to rehouse people who lose their homes or to prosecute them for non-payment of council tax.
<u>23</u>	yes, there are those who will not work extra hours when offered, or will work for cash in hand. Those who have a drug or alcohol dependence should not be carried by those who work hard for their families
<u>24</u>	Councillors taking a 7% pay cut and actually do a job!

<u>25</u>	I am a pensioner on guaranteed pension credit and AA for disability. I could afford to pay £10 a month to you in council tax instead if paying nothing and I wish there was some way of doing this. Can you do another survey to gauge opinion on this?
<u>26</u>	The council should as reported in the press increase the amount to 70% full stop - and not dilute the issue by giving other choices - more people are employed than unemployed - So a greater number will vote for upping the amount to be disregarded - so those in most need (Unemployed) will not benefit etc - the council will be favouring the better off if more people vote for the aforementioned.
<u>27</u>	As I say every time you consult on LCTS, if the DWP thought I could survive on less they'd *give* me less. My home is falling to bits and I can't afford to do anything about it.
<u>28</u>	I find it abhorrent that I receive benefits & disability (which the gov gives as the minimum to live on & I still pay council tax?!
<u>29</u>	Communication with people with mental health issues is patchy. I've had horrible phone calls with totally unsympathetic people. I'm sure I'm not alone in having to explain, in full, every time I speak to someone, if I'm in trouble, which only happens if I move house. Considering the state of the rental market, I'm sure people like me will be moving regularly, and the stress of that does not need compounding by someone who appears to believe you've stolen money from her handbag. We don't need judgement.
<u>30</u>	Scrap LCTS. Why should other taxpayers subsidise them? We wouldn't subsidise their supermarket food bill. If necessary, their state benefits should be increased.
<u>31</u>	Too many people in receipt of help that have falsified their claims. Make sure that the claims are legit.
<u>32</u>	Don't forget the disabled, who every year end up paying more from less overall money!
<u>33</u>	As a LCTS recipient the increase has taken a large percentage of small wages. Combined with fuel cost and rent we need to make a choice between paying for fuel, food and council tax. Council tax being last on the list of priorities and risk is worth defaulting in order of priority's
<u>34</u>	Not to cost too much so as to avoid increasing the Council Tax for those working persons who struggle to pay and get no assistance or help towards any costs
<u>35</u>	The administration of the scheme within the IW Council needs to be streamlined and the officers who deal with this need to receive updated training on dealing with those of us who need to access the scheme. I have never found it so difficult to deal with a council department, they seem particularly unwilling to talk to their customers and when you can talk to them, it is almost as though I am being 'talked down to'. As a working single parent, that is not an acceptable level of service. The scheme documents sent out to customers are difficult to understand and lack explanation. These are things which could be easily and quickly rectified and would actually save money in the long term, because if you make the scheme easy to understand and easy to access, queries can be resolved quickly without multiple calls / emails / letters.
<u>36</u>	Sorry, can't get my head round this, but I appreciate all the good work you do.
<u>37</u>	I think the council should look at support for the self-employed. In my situation you only have an income if you are chosen as preferred contractor. So, in some cases you earn less than minimum wage for the year. But still have to find the money to pay council tax. At the current scheme it's just about manageable. If the scheme was reduced it would mean more hardship for some.

Town and Parish Council responses to Local Council Tax Support Consultation 2023/24

Town & Parish Council	Comments
East Cowes Town Council	The Council agreed with Option 1, strongly agreed with Option 2, strongly agreed with Option 3, strongly agreed with Option 4 and strongly agreed with Option 5, and the views were made on behalf of the community of East Cowes.
Northwood Parish Council	The consultation was considered at the meeting on Tuesday 6 September and the Council resolved to support whatever measure gives assistance to those most in need.
Cowes Town Council	We would welcome the opportunity to give more support to families on low income and increase in the level of support would be much welcomed.
Nettlestone and Seaview Parish Council	The council neither agreed nor disagreed with Option 1, neither agreed nor disagreed with Option 2, neither agreed nor disagreed with Option 3, neither agreed nor disagreed with Option 4 and strongly agreed with Option 5. The council are in favour of Option 5 but no other changes.
Ryde Town Council	The Council voted for option 1 at our Full Council meeting on Monday 5 th September 2022.
Shanklin Town Council	Members noted the consultation document and resolved that they would comment individually if they so wished.
Newport and Carisbrooke Community Council	At the meeting held Monday 5 September it was unanimously decided amongst members that Newport and Carisbrooke Community Council support option one within the consultation. The council would welcome this increase as it would see those

in need receive the much-needed support that they require during this increasingly tough period. Although the Community Council would like to see this increase further in the future, the cost that comes with implementing and provided this is substantial.

Bembridge Parish Council

The Council neither agreed nor disagreed with Option 1, neither agreed nor disagreed with Option 2, neither agreed nor disagreed with Option 3, strongly agreed with Option 4 and agreed with Option 5.

Calbourne, Newtown and Porchfield Parish Council

The Council resolved that the Parish Council supported Option 1 to return the Council Tax support to 70%. The Parish Council considered that the Isle of Wight Council should support low-income households where a relatively small increase would provide a significant uplift to such households. It also resolved to support options 2 to 5 that as additional marginal support mechanisms that provide a fairer approach for the Council Tax support scheme. The Parish Council resolved that in the unfortunate circumstances that the Isle of Wight Council chose not to return to 70% Council Tax Support that the rate should remain at 65%.

Newchurch Parish Council

At its meeting on 27th September Newchurch Parish Council resolved to ask that the IW Council give due consideration to those most vulnerable in the community to any changes made to the current Local Council Tax Support Scheme.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority

Response to Council Tax Support Consultation

Thank you for consulting Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Authority about proposed changes to the council tax support scheme for the Isle of Wight.

Your letter requests views on the volatility of the council tax base and council tax yield in future years. Funding stability is important for the fire authority, in order to help maintain a consistent level of service. The authority accordingly prefers the council tax base to be managed in a way which reduces volatility. Our budget plans also assume that there will be growth to the council tax base each year due to factors such as new housing developments. Funding pressures and grant constraints means that council tax is an extremely important source of funding for fire and rescue services.

The consultation proposes several options for changes to the scheme, all of which make it slightly more generous to those receiving support. They can be grouped into two categories.

One group of items (options 4 and 5) involves allowing the scheme to disregard changes to local and national welfare and special payments. This seems a sensible change to make and keeps the scheme in line with how other benefits, such as housing benefit, assess these. It means that households will not for instance lose council tax support if they receive Government help with energy bills. It will also ensure that people do not get penalised for supporting important initiatives such as Homes for Ukraine.

The other group of proposals (options 1, 2 and 3) involve changes to support levels, the earnings disregard and the non-dependent deduction rate. Isle of Wight Council, as the authority responsible for running the scheme, will best know the circumstances of existing recipients. This should guide the design of the scheme, so without holding this detailed data we do not wish to comment on exactly where the thresholds should be set. We believe that a good scheme should though follow two general principles. Firstly, support should be prioritised for the most vulnerable, which your scheme appears to do. Secondly, the cost of the scheme needs to be carefully managed, as it reduces the amount of council tax income received to fund vital fire and rescue services. We note that the proposals all slightly increase the cost of the scheme and thus will reduce council tax income. However, we also fully appreciate that many households are currently under pressure from the rising cost of living. The increased cost of the scheme is also relatively modest. We are therefore content with these changes if Isle of Wight Council considers these new thresholds to be appropriate.

6 September 2022

Your reference: WP/DV/LM

Mrs Wendy Perera
Chief Executive – Interim
Isle of Wight Council
County Hall
High Street
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 1UD

By email: wendy.perera@iow.gov.uk

Dear Mrs Perera

Thank you for consulting me, in my duty as Police and Crime Commissioner, about Isle of Wight Council's proposed changes to its council tax support scheme.

The first group of proposals relate to changes to scheme thresholds (options 1, 2 and 3 - support levels, earnings disregard and the non-dependent deduction rate). Isle of Wight Council, through its responsibility for administering the council tax support scheme, will best know the circumstances of existing recipients. This should guide the setting of thresholds, so without holding this detailed data I do not wish to prescribe to the Council exactly where it should set these thresholds.

The other proposals (options 4 and 5) involve disregarding changes to local and national welfare and special payments. This seems reasonable as it will match how other benefits treat these. Households will not for instance lose council tax support if they receive Government help with energy bills or be penalised for supporting Homes for Ukraine.

I believe that a well-designed council tax support scheme should follow two key principles. Firstly, support should be prioritised for the most vulnerable, which the Isle of Wight's scheme appears to do. Secondly, the costs of the scheme need to be carefully managed, as granting support reduces the amount of council tax income available to me as the PCC. The proposed

changes slightly increase the cost of the scheme. However, I fully appreciate that many households are under pressure from the rising cost of living. I am thus content with these changes if the Isle of Wight Council considers these new thresholds to be appropriate.

Your letter also requested my views about council tax base volatility and council tax yield in future years. It is important that the precept funding I receive remains stable, to enable me to deliver on my Police and Crime priorities, and to ensure that I can continue to maintain the delivery of an effective Police Force on behalf of the residents of the Isle of Wight. I thus prefer the council tax base to be managed in a way which reduces volatility. My Budget plans also assume council tax base growth each year due to factors such as new housing developments.

Yours sincerely



Donna Jones
Police & Crime Commissioner

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